

OXFORD

TOWARDS FREEDOM

Documents
on the Movement
for Independence
in India

1939

Part 1

edited by
Mushirul Hasan

TOWARDS FREEDOM

Documents on the Movement for Independence in India, 1939 Part I

The *Towards Freedom* volumes, each edited by a distinguished scholar, bring together historical materials relating to the period 1937–47 from a wide variety of sources—official records, private and organizational papers, newspapers, and other contemporary publications available within the country. It presents documents relating to the activities, attitudes, and ideas of diverse classes and sections of Indian society, all of which contributed to the attainment of independence with partition.

This volume systematically covers in four parts, important socio-political developments around the year 1939. It begins with the working of ministries in British India including the role of colonial officials, Congress ministers, and prominent nationalist leaders. The next section highlights the resistance, political radicalism, and repression related to the Second World War. Chapter three discusses the developments in Princely India highlighting the role of Gandhi, Nehru, the Congress, All India States People's Conference, and the various state federations. The last chapter deals with the peasant movements, agrarian issues, and the role of the Kisan Sabhas in different parts of India.

A unique source material, this volume presents unpublished documents from the national and state archives and Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, as well as extracts from English, Hindi, and regional newspapers. It sheds important light on various aspects of anti-colonial resistance in British and Princely India, socio-cultural movements and legislations, peasant agitations, and subaltern movements.

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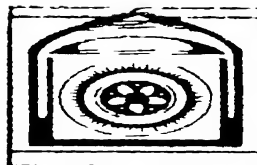
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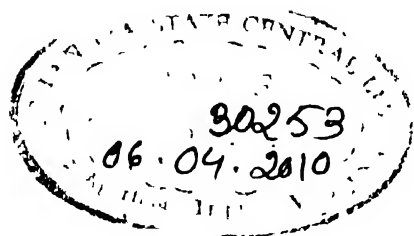
Volume Editor

Mushirul Hasan

Towards Freedom

Documents on the Movement for Independence in India
1939

PART 1



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B. C. S. C. L.

Edited by

Mushirul Hasan

With a Preface by the General Editor

Sabyasachi Bhattacharya

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General Editor's Preface

The agenda of an endeavour such as this series of volumes defines itself in part through editorial practice and partly through attempts towards a statement of objectives. The historical context in which this project developed initially is generally known. While it will be excessively deterministic to overestimate the influence of that historical conjuncture on the academic inputs which went into the making of the project's agenda, one has to take that into account as one of the formative factors. After the vertiginous years leading to 1947, there came a time when historians turned their attention to those years and archives began to acquire and provide access to source materials. The last years of 'British India' began to be addressed by professional historians and indeed the theme attracted national attention both in India and in Britain. In June 1967, the British Prime Minister Harold Wilson made an important statement in this regard in the House of Commons: 'in view of the great interest now being shown in historical circles in the last days of British rule in India', there would be published 'documents from the India Office records on the Transfer of Power and the events leading up to it.'¹ The announcement included the assurance that 'the editors will be independent historians who will be given unrestrained access to the records, and freedom to select and edit the documents for publication.' The outcome of the project thus framed at the highest level in England was the series known as *The Transfer of Power* edited by Nicholas Mansergh, Sinuts Professor of the History of the British Commonwealth at Cambridge. In addition to the announcement made in Parliament, Mansergh, as 'the Editor-in-Chief', stated that the 'purpose of the series' was 'to make available to scholars in convenient printed form the more important British historical records relating to the transfer of power in India'.²

Arguably, there is an obvious inadequacy in the notion that all that happened in 1947 was a 'transfer of power'. In Indian perception the attainment of Independence was a significant moment in the history of the struggle against British rule in the subcontinent. The representation of the emergence of independent India and Pakistan as transfer of power, solely an alteration of constitutional relations, tended towards the occlusion of that history. The focus on the legalistic notion of power transfer and the discourse of modalities of transfer, marginalized the more significant part of the historical processes at work. Likewise, the self-imposed limitations of the British documentation enterprise left many issues unaddressed: the project was to select documents from British state papers relating to the constitutional arrangements from the Cripps Mission of 1942 to 15 August 1947. In that discourse, in the official archives and the Viceroy's papers the Indian voice was recorded only in so far as a few important spokesmen of political parties were among those present in negotiations with the British Indian government. The Indian institutions, personalities and events were included in the documentation only to the extent the official papers took cognizance of them.

¹ *Parliamentary Debates*, 5th Series, House of Commons, Vol. 749, 30 June 1967, cols. 147–48.

² Nicholas Mansergh, ed. 'Foreword' *The Transfer of Power*, London, 1976, Vol. VI, p. viii.

That is not to say that the task of documentation in the twelve volumes produced between 1970 and 1983 by the HMSO was not competently handled by Professor Mansergh and his editorial assistants. These volumes were products of the best of British scholarship. But the initial conception of the project was delimited to certain issues and historical sources. I recall that in 1971 when I invited Sir Penderel Moon, a brilliant officer of the Indian Civil Service and later a member of Mansergh's editorial team, to a seminar at St Antony's College, Oxford, a number of us questioned him about this and he pointed out that perhaps we had not paid attention to the subtitle of the Mansergh volumes, 'Constitutional Relations between Britain and India'. Clearly the agenda for any Indian endeavour towards the documentation of the years leading to independence in 1947 would be different. How it would be different was suggested by Professor Sarvepalli Gopal in a luminous editorial Preface to the first volume produced under the present project. He said that the projected volumes aimed to 'present, within limits set by the sources, documents relating to the activities, attitudes and ideas of the diverse classes and sections of Indian society, all of which contributed to the attainment of Indian independence with partition.'¹

It is significant that the title chosen for this series was 'Towards Freedom'. While the sub-title emphasizes the focus upon the 'movement for independence', the title evokes discourses in other domains as well—the struggle for social justice, for economic empowerment against exploitation, and for cultural autonomy. These were also prominent discourses within the over-arching framework of the Indian people's struggle for freedom. One is reminded of the words of Mahatma Gandhi in an essay he wrote in the *Harijan* a few days before his death, on 27 January 1948: 'the Congress has won political freedom but it has yet to win economic freedom, social and moral freedom.'² This awareness of different categories of freedom allows space for a conception of the freedom struggle far wider in amplitude than the textbook approach to the struggle for independence from British rule. It makes a struggle for freedoms of many kinds thinkable. And it broadens the idea of a history of freedom struggle. This is how I understand the choice of the title for this series: *Towards Freedom*.

To sum it up, the present series of volumes focuses upon not just the legal processes of the transfer of power and the overtly political activities which brought that about, but also the struggle for freedom in different domains—economic, social, and cultural. The agenda of the series, therefore, is open to the entry of themes relating to the struggle of the peasantry, the working classes, and different sections of people as well as to a broad spectrum of political organizations who in their own light worked towards attainment of freedom.

To any one interested in the craft of history a pertinent question will be how the documentation will reflect this agenda. The selection of appropriate documents is not an easy task. We are here looking at long term historical processes such as the slowly evolving ideas about nationhood or class solidarity, the dynamics of popular participation in political movements, the links being forged between movements of the peasantry, the industrial labour and the freedom struggle, the youth and student movements vis a vis the political parties, the changing social hierarchy in caste terms in relation to electoral and agitational politics, the gender relationships evolving from the traditional patriarchal structure towards developments that had liberating potentials, the anti-feudal and anti-British movement in the princely states, and the interface between all these trends

¹ S. Gopal, 'General Editor's Preface', in Partha Sarathi Gupta, ed., *Towards Freedom 1943-44*, Delhi, 1997, p. vii.

² M.K. Gandhi, 'Congress Position', *Harijan*, 1.2.48, *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. 90, p. 497. Also see 'His Last will and Testament', *Harijan*, 15.2.48 where he spoke of economic, social and moral dimensions of independence, beyond the political independence which had been attained, *ibid.*, p. 526. This document was written c. 29 January 1948, shortly before Gandhi's death, and it was also referred to in the AICC papers as 'Draft Constitution of the Congress'.

in the ideational and cultural domains. The instantiation of these long-term processes through events as reflected in documents is the task at hand. The documents reflect fragments of the events which constitute links in the chain of certain historical processes of long duration.

It was decided years ago at an early stage of this project to distribute the work among editors on a purely chronological basis, that is to say each the volume in this series would relate to a particular year assigned to an editor. This opened the project to the possibility that the long term processes would be lost sight of in the depiction of the particularities of the year each editor is taking care of. I incurred unpopularity in the ICHR when I suggested many years ago that a thematic division of labour between the various editors, rather than a chronological one assigning one year to each, would have been a better organizing principle.⁵ I will not elaborate that point again. Whatever the drawbacks or merits of the chronological frame for assigning editorial responsibility might have been, it has been in operation for twenty years and hopefully it will enable us to complete the task before us. For the volume editors the limitation of chronological framework has been probably an irksome constraint. On the whole, the volume editors, each a distinguished historian, bore with fortitude the limits set on their temporal range, and they situate the particular historical conjuncture of a given year in the broader perspective of the long term processes as they see them in the Introduction to the volume. The editor's Introduction is thus a bridge between the narrative of events and the narrative of the freedom struggle as he or she sees it. The editor's introductory observations also provide a space for the presentation of his or her approach to the themes and issues the volume addresses and the explication of that approach.

As regards the sources from which the documents are collected for the volumes in this series, Professor Sarvepalli Gopal, in his General Editor's Preface, remarked in 1997: 'Although some of the volumes contain documents drawn from regional language sources, a fully comprehensive selection from these sources merit a separate project.'⁶ This was an accurate prediction of the future output, i.e. the volumes now coming out. In deciding on what non-English and regional language sources will be collected the volume editors have exercised their judgement in deploying the research assistance they were provided. Judging by volumes produced till now and the manuscripts now being received from editors and being processed in the editorial office at the ICHR, the editors possibly felt that on most of the themes addressed there exist sufficient source material in the English language and in translation. A more systematic search for and selection of non-English sources would have made this collection more complete, but it was evidently not found to be feasible. We are committed to a schedule which requires us to complete as early as possible the project undertaken in 1988-89 rather than to expand the scope of the editors' search to new sources.

One more point needs to be made about the sources. Probably, in the last decade of the Raj, specially during the World War, perspicacious observers began to sense a debilitation of the imperial powers and the impending decolonization process on a global scale, and the consequent shift in the power relationships,—this altered their perception of the politics of independence struggle radically. This was happening globally in old empires, among the people and leaders in the imperial metropolises as well as to their colonial peripheries. On the latter process we do have some documentation in the present series, but not much on the shift in the imperial metropolis. This is because *ab initio* the project was meant to be mainly for the collection of sources in India. This was probably because it was clear from the beginning that we have our hands full if we look at the

⁵ S. Bhattacharya, 'The Empire on Borrowed Time: Towards Freedom 1943-44', *The Book Review*, Vol. xxii, Jan.-Feb. 1998, pp. 24-5.

⁶ S. Gopal, 'General Editor's Preface', P.S. Gupta ed., *op. cit.*, p. vii.

Indian archival sources alone. The mass and density of archival sources generated by the government in India will be evident to even a layman who glances at the following pages. Moreover, as I mentioned earlier, unlike similar enterprises in England, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka to collect sources throwing light on the last days of the British Raj, this series includes a great many activities and events which are not overtly political or constitutional.

A few words on the editorial apparatus in these volumes may be in order. The chapters are thematically organized while the sequence of placement of documents in each chapter is strictly chronological. There are two guides for the reader, first the Calendar of Documents indicating the subject of each document and the source, and second, the Index at the end of the volume. An effort has been made to make the volumes as 'reader-friendly' as possible. In some collections of this nature the editorial practice has been to provide a synoptic account of the contents of each document. This has not been the pattern in this series chiefly because it would increase the size of the volumes. As it is the present volume is very bulky and the editors are to be applauded for trying to trim them down.

Before concluding I would like to put on record the annoying delays this project was subjected to on account of political interference to the detriment of academic autonomy. One result of such interference was that the ICHR authorities appointed no successor to the General Editor, Professor Sarvepalli Gopal when he passed away in April 2002; in fact all work on the project was suspended for about five years. I was asked in March 2005 to take up the task initiated by Professor Gopal, my senior colleague at Jawaharlal Nehru University. Upon accepting this position, an honorary one, my first task was to request Mushirul Hasan to complete the project he had undertaken, documentation of the freedom struggle in the year 1939. Despite his busy schedule as the Vice-Chancellor of Jamia Millia University, New Delhi, he responded to my request and I will like to record my thanks to him.

The disruption in the production of the volumes in the series for several years up to 2005 was tantamount to political censorship of academic work. It is interesting to note here that the British developed a system which prevented political parties' interference in such matters. The British project for the documentation of the Transfer of Power was processed through a mechanism which ensured inter-party consensus in parliament.⁷ For this purpose a standing inter-party group of Privy Counsellors was appointed and it included a minister of the ruling party and representatives of the opposition parties, the Conservative and Liberal Parties; thus, once the project was passed by that committee, the task was left to experts duly appointed and no political interference occurred. In the light of what happened in our country on account of governmental changes, one might say that there was much that was commendable in the mechanism devised in Britain.

It is hoped that the agenda outlined above makes it amply clear what have been and remain the principles of documentation in the *Towards Freedom* series. The editors of the volumes have had the freedom to exercise their choice within certain parameters and they focus upon the themes which emerge from the selected documents. An editor of a volume in this series stated what most other editors would endorse: this is not 'an attempt to provide materials for an "official" or "definitive" statement on the history of the freedom movement.'⁸ I accepted the responsibility of being the General Editor of this series since I believe that although the government of India has funded this enterprise, like many other research projects and institutions in this country, the output of the project is the work of autonomous minds of scholars guided by standards of the

⁷ *Parliamentary Debates*, 5th series, House of Commons, Vol. 733, col. 1706.

⁸ Basudev Chatterjee ed., *Towards Freedom 1938*, Delhi, 1999, p. lvii.

discipline of historiography. As I have said in the beginning, not only agenda statements like the one I have attempted now, but practice has defined principles as well, and that is how an academic community works.

* * *

What is this volume on the year 1939 in the 'Towards Freedom' series about? The editor of this volume, Mushirul Hasan, has addressed that question very comprehensively in his Introduction and all I need to do perhaps is to raise a few questions on issues which pertain to the long-term point of view, as distinct from the focus on the year 1939 in this volume. A number of questions cross one's mind as one looks at this vast collection of documents. What were the aims and achievements of the ministries elected under the Government of India of 1935 in the provinces? Was Congress administration till September 1939 a pilot run for the Congress policies and governmental agenda in the post-independence years?

The present volume (Part I) is structured around some major themes in the year 1939. In Chapter I in this volume we come across the provincial Ministries in 1939. The Congress ministries in the provinces included most of the prominent Congress leaders and some who attained prominence in the post-independence years. Among these were the 'Prime Ministers', as they were called in 1937-39, G.B. Pant in the United Provinces, C. Rajagopalachari in Madras, B.G. Kher in Bombay, Srikrishna Sinha in Bihar, Gopinath Bardoloi in Assam, and R.S. Shukla in the Central Provinces. The ministers in the provinces included Rafi Ahmed Kidwai, K.N. Katju, Vijay Lakshmi Pandit, G.L. Nanda, K.M. Munshi, Dr Subbarayan, Anugrah Narayan Sinha, Jagjivan Ram, Fakkruddin Ali Ahmed, and a host of other stalwarts. In the middle of 1939, Viceroy Linlithgow wrote in a report to the Secretary of State: these Ministries 'have realized that they are where they are in order that they may govern'; further, the AICC had passed Resolutions to curb unwelcome agitations: first, to enjoin Provincial Congress Committees not to interfere in the day to day administration of the ministries, and second, to instruct Congressmen not to offer *satyagraha* against provincial governments without authorization from the Party.⁹ While the Viceroy appreciated the new attitude of Congressmen to the business of governing, a senior Congressman, K. Santhanam, similarly commended the ministries: 'The Congress Ministries have demonstrated that for efficient, responsible government what is needed is disinterested patriotism and not technical acquaintance of bureaucratic machinery which can be acquired at very short notice.... The masses have tasted power and politics has assumed an aspect of reality which no amount of agitation would have enabled it to assume.'¹⁰

While there was this satisfaction that Congress was capable of governance, perhaps a good augury for the future, there was also dissatisfaction with the incompleteness of what the Congress ministries had achieved (for example, no progress in local self-government, no steps towards land reforms, faltering action in the area of prohibition of liquor, and such others) as well as strident complaints (for example in the area of labour legislation and industrial arbitration, the government and police forces backing capitalist interests at the times of strikes, and so on). The *National Herald* admitted that the experience of governance 'showed us our own failings' and how 'the best-laid schemes of popular ministers could be shelved or hung up by the unimaginative or hostile

⁹ Quarterly Review of the Political and Constitutional Position, May-31 July 1939, Linlithgow Papers, Nos 8-14, Acc. No. 2324, NAI. Chapter 1, Document No. 60 in this volume.

¹⁰ K. Santhanam 'Was it worthwhile? The Congress Experiment of Office Acceptance', *Hindustan Times*, 31 October 1939. Chapter 1, Document No. 91, in this volume.

subordinates' in the bureaucracy.¹¹ Not only were there strident critics of the actions or inaction of the Congress ministers among non-Congress politicians, but even the Congressmen among Muslims felt aggrieved and alienated in some provinces; in this respect a note, translated from Urdu, from Maulana Muhsin Sajjad to the Congress Working Committee is very revealing.¹²

Chapter II in this collection focuses upon the Congress attitude to the World War into which India was driven, tied to the chariot wheels of imperial Britain. The latter part of the previous chapter¹³, concerning the resignation of Congress Ministries, may be read in the context of the documentation made in Chapter II. The Indian National Congress had made their position abundantly clear in their resolutions dissociating themselves from British foreign policy and in emphasizing India's right to self-determination, a right which the Allies were supposed to uphold. Chapter II provides the historical background and reproduces the relevant resolutions of Congress sessions at Lucknow in April 1936, Faizpur in December 1936, Haripura in February 1938, and Tripuri in March 1939.¹⁴ In April we see Subhas Bose reiterating this position on 'the imperialist war' in his circular to all provincial government's Prime Ministers.¹⁵ The Working Committee appointed in September the War Sub-Committee consisting of Nehru, Vallabhbhai Patel and Abul Kalam Azad.¹⁶ Nehru was in the lead on this issue throughout and it is interesting to see the notes of an impromptu meeting, away from the public eye, between him and Sir Harry Graham Haig, Governor of United Provinces on 21 September. Haig's personal report on the meeting conveyed to the Viceroy the message that Nehru was 'personally anxious to assist in the full prosecution of the war' and was not unwilling to negotiate with the Viceroy. However, Nehru felt that the crux of the problem was the failure of the British Government to respond to Congress pronouncements on the war and to accept 'India's right to determine her own destinies'.¹⁷ The Viceroy was unable to respond to Haig's suggestion that at least a very general sort of statement be made: it was 'clearly out of the question for us to commit ourselves to vague promises of Dominion Status at end of the war and the like. There would be no hope of securing Parliament's approval for that, and apart from that we have to consider legitimate claims of, and reactions on, the Princes, the Muslims and parties other than the Congress'.¹⁸ Thus the British allowed the situation to slide to an inevitable denouement, the resignation of the Congress Ministries, a process hastened by the repressive and centralizing measures which the Viceroy and his government thought were necessary under war conditions. The outcome finally was summed up by Mahatma Gandhi in a luminous phrase: 'the Congress had asked for bread and it has got a stone'.¹⁹ While this was the main story, the editor of this volume, Prof. Hasan, has also included documents which provide sidelights. We see a peevish Viceroy complaining privately of Nehru who was 'the chief nuisance

¹¹ 'The Congress Leaves Office', Editorial, *National Herald*, 1 November 1939. Chapter 1, Document No. 92 in this volume

¹² The Congress Ministries' Impressions of a Congress Sympathizer: Maulana Muhsin Sajjad to Congress Working Committee, 22 December 1939 (7 Zil Hijj 1358) In Urdu, AICC Papers, File No. G-42, 1939, NMML. Chapter 2, Document No. 115 in this volume.

¹³ See Chapter 2, Documents Nos 69 to 116 in this volume.

¹⁴ 'Not an open question' by Ram Manohar Lohia, *Congress Socialist*, 9 April 1939. Chapter 2, Document No. 3 in this volume.

¹⁵ Subhas Bose to Prime Minister (all Congress Prime Ministers), 19 April 1939; Rajendra Prasad Papers, F. No. 2, C-39, NAI. Chapter 2, Document No. 4 in this volume.

¹⁶ India and the War: War Sub Committee to Secretaries, Provincial Congress Committees, 17 September 1939, *SWJN*, Vol. 10, pp. 141-43 Chapter 2, Document No. 46 in this volume.

¹⁷ Note of Interview with Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru on 21 September 1939 by Haig, 21 September 1939. Chapter 2, Document No. 55 in this volume

¹⁸ Viceroy to Haig, 22 September 1939. Chapter 2, Document No. 57, in this volume.

¹⁹ *Harijan*, 21 October 1939, *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. 70, pp. 267-68.

in this business',²⁰ and 'as impervious to argument as Hitler'²¹. C. Rajagopalachari was the cause of another kind of complaint that he was deviating from the official Congress line towards a pro-Britain position.²² Or again, we have Mr V.D. Savarkar's interview with the Viceroy on 9 October 1939 and his own gloss on it in statements found in the private papers of M.S. Aney.²³ On the whole the first two chapters explore these diverse views on the War and the Provincial Ministries in the documentary sources.

1939 was also an important year in the development of the People's movement in the Princely States and Chapter III focuses on that theme. This year was important because the All-India States People's Conference (AISPC) received a new mandate from the Haripura Session 1938, of the Indian National Congress. Till 1938, according to Nehru, the Congress considered the people of the Princely States 'unprepared' and therefore, Congress 'husbanded its energy in the struggle outside.'²⁴ From 1938 Haripura Session the State People's movement was pushed forward to a new level. Nehru in his Presidential Address to the AISPC on 15 February 1939 took an uncompromising position: 'The States in modern India are anachronistic and do not deserve to exist.' Further, 'the integrity and unity of India was an essential part of the independence we worked for, and the same full measure of political, social and economic freedom was to come to the States as to the rest of India.'²⁵ It was obviously the anti-feudal and anti-imperialist character of the movement in the Princely States which attracted Nehru and like-minded Congressmen. The documents in Chapter III throw a shaft of light on both these aspects of the movement. The detailed chronicle of different states widely dispersed in the subcontinent, are not mere chronicles of 'local skirmishes.'²⁶ One has to bear in mind the overall strategies that guided the disparate struggles in different states with their particular agendas. This overall strategy is revealed in the early part of Chapter III and the documents detailing the course of events in different States follow.

Chapter IV takes us to a somewhat different terrain of people's struggle, the kisan movement. Documents have been culled from rare sources such as journals like *Sangharsh*, *National Front*, *Hitavada*, *Kisan Bulletin*, *Congress Socialist*, and others and reports on various peasants' conferences in 1939 to build a composite picture. An excellent survey of the all-India scene is available in the report of the All-India Kisan Conference, presided over by Swami Sahajanand Saraswati²⁷ and an article by the communist leader P.C. Joshi in the *National Front*²⁸. Joshi claimed that 'the All-India Kisan Sabha has become the second biggest mass organisation in the country after the National Congress.'²⁹ Moreover, the significant characteristic of this movement was that, as N.G. Ranga put

²⁰ On Nehru and Rajendra Prasad: The Viceroy's impressions, Linlithgow to Zetland, 4 October 1939. Zetland Papers, Acc. No. 1972, NAI. Chapter 2, Document No. 73 in this volume.

²¹ India and the War: The Viceroy's Impressions, Viceroy to Secretary of State (Tel.), 3 October 1939, Linlithgow Papers, Acc. No. 2335, NAI. Chapter 2, Document No. 72 in this volume.

²² On Rajagopalachari's Views on India and the War, P.C. Joshi to Jawaharlal Nehru, 5 October 1939. C. Rajagopalachari Papers (2), NMML. Chapter 2, Document No. 74 in this volume.

²³ Hindu Mahasabha and War, Statement issued on 15 October 1939 by V.D. Savarkar, President of the Hindu Mahasabha, in connection with his interview with the Viceroy on 9 October 1939 at Bombay; M.S. Aney Papers, File No. 7 of the Subject files, NMML. Chapter 2, Document No. 93 in this volume.

²⁴ J. Nehru, Presidential Address, AISPC, Ludhiana, 15 February 1939, *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, Vol. 9, pp. 418-31.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Report of the Non-Official Enquiry into the tragic happenings in Dhami State on 16 July 1939, AISPC Papers, File No. 181, 1939 (pt. ii), NMML. Chapter 3, Document no. 6 in this volume.

²⁷ Kisan Affairs (from the *Kisan Bulletin* of the All-India Kisan Sabha, 17 March 1939); *National Front*, 19 March 1939. Chapter 4, Document No. 33 in this volume.

²⁸ 'Kisan Movement—Reviews and Tasks', An Article by P.C. Joshi, *National Front*, 2 April 1939. Chapter 4, Document No. 38 in this volume.

²⁹ Ibid.

it, the Kisan movement was 'the common platform of Gandhites and Socialists,' even though they had major differences regarding the priorities and the Gandhians, unlike the Socialists, did not think that 'the interests of landowners and Kisans are irreconcilable'³⁰. The asymmetries between the different perceptions of such issues and the agenda of anti-imperialist freedom struggle constitute a major theme in this series of volumes; in 1939 we see the beginnings of the articulation of this theme and we shall in later volumes see how that develops into the events in the later years.

In these four chapters, the editor of the volume has put together documents which allow us to form a clear idea of the state of affairs in 1939 in respect of (1) the provincial ministries formed in 1937 after the general election under the Government of India Act of 1935, (2) the Congress stance on the war and the interface between nationalism and an unresponsive British policy with regard to India's claims to self-determination, (3) the progress of the All India States People's movement, and (4) the growth of the Kisan movement. Beyond the details of the story of what happened in 1939 the main plot that unfolds is that the Congress attempt at governance came to an end in 1939 and the stage was prepared for a confrontation with the British Government under the shadow of the on-going World War. It is interesting to see how some of the participants in this process perceived themselves as actors on the stage of history. Viceroy Linlithgow writes in his report to the Secretary of State in London: 'It may well be that *the historian of the future* will assign particular importance to the first quarter of the third year of Provincial Autonomy [i.e. 1939] as the moment in history when the theory that Congress Ministries were in office not to govern the country but to wreck the constitution from inside was given an unostentatious burial.'³¹ In a similar historical vein the *National Herald* writes a few months later, after the resignation of Congress ministries: 'one by one the Congress Ministries resign and retire from office and provincial autonomy functions no more.... Thus ends an experiment that began two and a half years ago. *History will judge* of this experiment and of the role that the Congress Ministries have played.'³² It is for the readers of this volume to form that 'judgement of history' which the British and the Indians looked to in playing their roles in the events of a climatic year, 1939.

* * *

In conclusion, I would like to acknowledge my indebtedness to the editorial team. In the latter half of 2005 as I was casting around for colleagues to work with me in the *Towards Freedom* project, I was fortunate to obtain as colleagues Prof Arjun Dev and Dr Amit K. Gupta (who had an important role in an earlier stage of this project); later Mr Rajesh Kumar, Mr Dusi Srinivas, and Ms V.I. Benasir joined us. Needless to say, the Editorial Committee which met from time to time since the middle of 2005 was of great help: my thanks go to my distinguished fellow-editors in charge of different volumes: Professors Bipan Chandra, Bimal Prasad, K.N. Panikkar, Sumit Sarkar, Arjun Dev, Mushirul Hasan, Basudev Chatterjee and Dr Sucheta Mahajan. I would also like to thank Oxford University Press, New Delhi, for their cooperation. Archiving is to historiography what brick-making is to architecture, and therefore our thanks also go to many unnamed archivists.

SABYASACHI BHATTACHARYA
General Editor

³⁰ Kisan Sabha, The Common Platform for Gandhites and Socialists, Article by N.G. Ranga, *Modern Review*, Vol. LXVI, July 1939, pp. 66–69. Chapter 4, Document No. 85 in this volume.

³¹ Quarterly Review of the Political and Constitutional Position, May–31 July 1939, Linlithgow Papers, Nos 8–14, Acc. No. 2324, NAI. Chapter 1, Document No. 60 in this volume.

³² The Congress Leaves Office, Editorial, *National Herald*, 1 November 1939; *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, Vol. 10, pp. 215–17. Chapter 1, Document No. 92 in this volume.

Editor's Introduction

The Government of India Act of 1935 ushered in a number of important political and constitutional changes. These were accelerated when provincial elections took place two years later in 1937. The Indian National Congress had contested 11,61 of the 1,585 seats and won 716. It had a clear majority in 6 of the 11 provinces and was the largest single party in the other three provinces. For once, even the intransigent colonial officials heeded its claim of being a 'National Party'. The Muslim League, on the other hand, fared poorly, especially in Punjab and Bengal. It performed better in the non-Muslim provinces, but that could hardly vindicate its claim of being the sole representative of the Muslims. The success of provincial parties like Krishak Praja Party in Bengal and Unionist Party in Punjab illustrated that the Muslim electorates were primarily concerned with 'provincial' or 'local' issues. They wanted to safeguard their interests at this level rather than turn to the national arena where the British, the Congress, and the Muslim League wrestled with the intricacies of devolution of power.

The Congress came to power in the United Provinces, Bihar, Orissa, the Central Provinces, Bombay, Madras, Assam, and the North West Frontier Provinces. Its ministries in the provinces were more stable than the ones in the non-Congress provinces, and they worked purposefully and effectively. The new machinery they set up went rapidly into smooth working order, proving more than adequate to its task. The ministers functioned; they conducted legislative business and managed to soothe the tempers of their adversaries.

A number of documents in this volume do, however, reveal that some of the Congress policies evoked anger and opposition. For example, the Industrial Disputes Bill (1938) led to a major strike on 7 December. And when it was suppressed with a heavy hand, an angry B.R. Ambedkar declared that it was not possible to have a single day's strike without repression and terrorism being let loose. The Bombay Workers' and Peasants' Party chided the Congress for not supporting the GIP Railway Workers' strike. Nehru disagreed. According to him, Congress was not a labour organization, but a large body comprising all manners of people.

In 1931, the UP Congress had appointed a committee to look into the agrarian situation; another committee reported five years later and recommended the abolition of the Zamindari system. While two radical attempts to alter the land revenue system in Madras and Orissa were dropped, the UP Ministry adopted a comprehensive UP Act XVII of 1939. This significant piece of legislation brought credit to G.B. Pant, the chief minister, Rafi Ahmad Kidwai, who introduced the bill in the council, and their colleagues.

However, the Bihar ministry dithered over the thorny question of *bakasht* land. The Bihar Restoration of Bakasht Lands and reduction of Arrears of Rent Act did not add up to very much. No wonder, some Congress ministers target the activists in the Anwari satyagraha. In Saran district, as the writings of Gyanendra Pandey and other historians suggest, leaders like Rahul Sankrityayana were denied the status of political prisoners. Sardar Patel declared in April 1938 that Comrade Lenin was not born in India and he did not want a Lenin in the country. He described those who preached class hatred as country's enemies. This is not all. The hero of the Bardoli satyagraha even banned the kisan rally and kisan conference in Vithalnagar, yet 2,000 peasants marched past

the national flag with their own national and red flags, and 10,000 attended their meetings which, of course, had to be conducted for the most part without any light in that great city of a million lights.

Non-Congress ministries were formed in Bengal, Punjab, Assam, and Sindh. Indian ministers governed with little formal intervention by the Governors or disagreements with them. Except in Punjab, there were no strong governments. Uneasy coalitions tended to be vulnerable to pressures of all sorts. The strength of the Punjab ministry, by contrast, reflected the province's social and communal structure—a stable cross-communal coalition led by the National Unionist Party under Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan. Broadly speaking, the party represented the interests of the Punjabi agriculturalists.

While the Congress ministers settled down to pursuing their agenda, a theme adequately covered in this volume, the war clouds were gathering in Europe. Hitler invaded Poland on 1 September 1939, and two days later Britain and France declared war on Germany. Within a few hours of the declaration of War, the Viceroy announced India's participation on the side of the allies. He did this without consulting the provincial governments or the people's representatives in the legislatures. In the dominions of Canada and Australia, on the other hand, prior consultations were held with the elected representatives. Jawaharlal Nehru declared that India would not submit to any form of exploitation to further Britain's war effort. Could India fight for democracy if she herself did not have it?

The war declaration was followed by an amendment to the Act of 1935 which had granted the Viceroy, Linlithgow, the power to override its provisions for co-coordinating the activities of the central and provincial governments in prosecuting the war. He was also empowered to direct the provincial governments to exercise their executive authority, including the enactment of laws. Such an amendment struck at the very root of responsible government and rendered provincial autonomy ineffective, the Congress asked its members not to attend the Central Assembly's next session.

The Viceroy and the Secretary of State realized the gravity of the situation arising out of Congress' intransigence. Both agreed to set up a consultative group that included representatives of all political parties in British India and of the Indian princes. The Viceroy also declared that Dominion status was the goal of British policy in India. But the Congress Working Committee at its meeting held in Wardha on 22–23 October 1939 described the proposals as 'an unequivocal reiteration of the old imperialist policy'.¹ Its resolution stated that, if the war was to defend the status quo, imperialist possessions, colonies, vested interests and privileges then India can have nothing to do with it. If, however, the issue is democracy, then India is intensely interested in it. If Great Britain was fighting for the maintenance and extension of democracy, then she must necessarily end imperialism in her own possessions and establish full democracy in India.²

The British government was called upon to declare its war aims 'in regard to democracy and imperialism' and also to announce whether those aims would apply to India. Importantly enough, the Congress demanded that India be freed from colonial bondage.

Now, the Congress could either resign or continue in power at the provincial level. After much debate and disagreement among its leaders, the ministries were asked to resign. Thereafter, in November 1939, the Congress high command announced that, 'in no event can the Congress

¹ Viceroy's Statement Unsatisfactory: Congress Decision, *Hindu*, 23 October 1939. See Chapter 1, Document No. 81(b) in this volume on p. 168.

² The Congress and the War: Working Committee's Manifesto, *CWMG*, Vol. 70, pp. 409–13. See Chapter 2, Document No. 40 in this volume on p. 310.

accept the responsibility of the Government even in the transitional period without real power being given to popular representatives.³ It insisted on convening a Constituent Assembly in order to determine the country's democratic constitution.

The Viceroy turned to the Muslim League and 'Muslim India', as he termed it to buttress his claims. Mohammad Ali Jinnah, claiming to be the 'sole spokesman' of the Muslim community, made his support to the war efforts dependent on justice for Muslims and a guarantee of no constitutional advance without its approval. This was set out in the League's resolution of 18 September 1939. Jinnah and his party, founded in December 1906 at Dacca, adopted a separate course in politics in order to create a powerful Muslim constituency that would sooner or later challenge the Congress' imperious claim to represent all India. Muslims must have a say and Jinnah, as their sole spokesman, had to decide whether India will remain united or partitioned.

Some of the documents in this volume point to the factors that facilitated this process. Readers will find in them references to the row over the Communal Award, the messy coalition debate after the 1937 elections, and the 'miscalculated moves' on the part of the Congress, including the launching of the Muslim Mass Contact Campaigns, Jawaharlal Nehru's brainchild. They would notice that the conduct of the Congress ministries was, probably, the last straw. Although the Pirpur and Sharif Reports carried false and exaggerated accounts of 'Hindu excesses', in the world of politics perceptions matter more than anything else. The impression gained ground that the Wardha Scheme of education, the introduction of Vande Mataram in schools, the imposition of Hindi as the national language, and the adoption of the Vidya Mandir Scheme in the Central Provinces would lead to the creation of 'Hindu Raj'.

Jinnah capitalized on the widespread grievances against the Congress and declared 22 December 1939 as the 'Day of Deliverance'. This was an act of political indiscretion, for it led to violence in some parts of the country and to the polarization of Hindu-Muslim sentiments. From Jinnah's own point of view, however, this belligerent move paid off. Suddenly, he bounced back to spearhead a movement that would eventually lead to India's bloody partition. This was unthinkable after the Muslim League's poor performance in the 1937 elections.

Just when Jinnah was refurbishing his party's image and making serious inroads into the provinces, a story well told by Ayesha Jalal, other voices were also being heard in Muslim quarters. In the later 1930s, for example, witnessed the growth of a new kind of Muslim activism—the Khaksar movement. Led by Allama Mashraqui, it lent a new shape and structure to Muslim politicization. He addressed primarily social and religious issues concerning the Muslims and contributed indirectly to the emergence of the Muslim League as a popular party.

In the face of massive repression, the petering out of the Civil Disobedience movement (1932–3) had led to a shift in the minds of 'distracted' Congressmen. Many of them were young and ardent nationalists who pursued variants of Marxist ideology with a view to radicalize Congress policies and programmes and to lend a 'fuller meaning' to freedom. It also included 'left-inclined' nationalist leaders, such as Nehru and Bose, who played critical roles in pursuing the 'left' vision within the Congress. Consequently, various moves were afoot to infuse a socialist content into Congress programmes, and correspondingly, transform the ideological composition of the leadership.

However, even though the 1930s provided an opportunity for the consolidation of left radicalism with the Congress, its proponents lost their ground to the 'Old Guards'. This development was precipitated by the conflict between Gandhi and Subhas Chandra Bose.

³ Congress Working Committee Resolution, *CWMG*, Vol. 70, pp. 370–73. See Chapter 2, Document No. 131 in this volume on p. 459.

Bose, president of the Haripura Congress session in 1938, had declared his candidature for the next year. Gandhi, on the other hand, lent his weight behind Pattabhi Sitaramayya. Still, Bose was re-elected. Gandhi took the defeat of his candidate personally. He made it clear to the 'minority' within the Congress that '...if they could not keep pace with it, they must come out of the Congress'⁴ not in a spirit of ill-will but with the deliberate attempt at rendering effective service. Gandhi's 'directive' sent mixed signals to the two opposing fronts. For Bose, who alone represented the aspirations of radical forces, Gandhi's comments brought to the fore the wide gap between the two 'blocs' in the Congress. Right-wing Congress were, on the other hand, offered the space to launch tirades against their ideological leftist adversaries.

To avoid embarrassment and confrontation, Bose resigned from the Congress Presidentship and set up the Forward Block. He had endeavoured to bring all left-wing groups into a single organization without forcing them to merge their distinct political identities to meet, what he called, 'Right consolidation'.

It is well known that the Kisan Sabha and Ekta movements swept some parts of the United Provinces in the early 1920s. Jawaharlal Nehru, then a fresh recruit to Indian politics, discovered a whole countryside in southern Awadh afire with enthusiasm and excitement. One village would communicate with another and the second with the third, and so on. At times, whole villages emptied out, and right across the fields men and women and children would be seen marching towards the meeting place. Or, more swiftly still, the cry of Sita Ram ... Sitar a-a-a-m ... would rend the air, and echo afar in every direction and be echoed back from other villages, and then people would come streaming out or even running as fast as possible.

1939 also witnessed the unfolding of agrarian struggles against the British encroachment of rights on land, enhancement of revenue rates, statutory landlordism, and at ensuring better wages and service conditions. The Kisan Sabhas channelled the peasantry's consciousness and linked it, quite successfully, with the broader aspirations of the Indian people. They raised the issues of *nazrana* (present or premium), *bedakhli* (eviction) of peasant from his holding, and *abwab* (cesses).

Even though some historians point to the clash of interests between the kisans and the politics of the time, other argue that the ends of political struggle and peasant activity were not altogether irreconcilable. Whether or not the Congress comprehended the little known world of the peasant, the fact remains that its election manifesto of August 1936 had played a vital role in securing the peasantry's support in the contest for provincial legislatures. But, as we have seen, the ministries did not fulfill their expectations. Widespread allegations of the Congress abandoning its agrarian programme in favour of the landlords appeared in the newspapers. Indeed, the documents in this volume reveal the Congress restlessness with the Kisan Sabha's demands for abolishing zamindari, reducing land revenue, rent and water rates and liquidating debts. In some cases, as indicated above, the ministries resorted to repression in several places in Bihar and Andhra.

Moving to a different terrain, it is worth referring to the ambiguities in the Congress attitude towards the princely states, some of which were in the throes of a powerful people's movement against its rulers. Rajkot, where Gandhi's father had been a Dewan, was astir. So was Jaipur, where the Praja Mandal was banned and Seth Jamnalal Bajaj was arrested for defying the ban on his entry into the state. Gandhi himself wrote that Talcher and Dhenkanal had led the way to repression.

In this volume we carry forward the story of the growing political and agrarian unrest in the princely states. These states were, as is well known, kept out of the Congress mobilization campaigns since 1920. The Congress Working Committee in mid-December 1938 referred to the circumstances

⁴ *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* (CWMG), Vol. 68, p. 360

that imposed certain limitations on interfering directly in the internal struggle in the princely states. This strategy arose out of the fear Pattabhi Sitaramayya expressed: 'Congress [would] be embroiling itself with the local vagaries and idiosyncrasies of a variety of states, 562 in number, a task obviously beyond the pale of the practical politics of Congress.'⁵ Gandhi defended this policy as a perfect piece of statesmanship. According to him, 'that part of India which is described as British has no more power to shape the policy of the states than it has (say) of Afghanistan or Ceylon.' His views represented the conservative opinion in the Congress. To its adherents, foreign autocracy was more reprehensible than indigenous autocracy.

The benign autocracy of the Indian princes did not disturb Gandhi. If, for certain purposes and in certain contexts, he supported democracy, he did not commit himself to the principles of popular or representative government in the princely states. In line with important aspects of Indian traditional thought, which turn to inner virtue rather than institutional restraints as the guarantor of public morality, Gandhi was more concerned in the 1920s with the personal debauchery of princes, where it existed, rather than with their failure to grant political liberty. In sharp contrast to Gandhi's stand, the Congress Left, including Nehru, opposed this policy of non-interference.

The All-India States People's Conference, formed by prominent Congress in 1927, existed. But some of its leaders like C.Y. Chintamani and Ram Chandra Rao, former chief minister of Mysore, were conservative politicians and did little to activate the body. Only in the later 1930s, under the leadership of Pattabhi Sitaramayya and eventually Nehru, did the Conference take a militant turn. At the same time, both Gandhi and the Congress shifted to a more pro-active posture. They did so partly in response to the mounting pressure in some non-Rajput princely states, notably Mysore. As Sardar Patel put it: 'The policy of non-intervention by the Congress was ... a perfect piece of statesmanship when the people of the States were not awakened. That policy would be cowardice when there is all-around awakening among the people of the States.'⁶

The Congress also changed its course following the passage of the Act of 1935. The party was spurred into action by the prospect of a federal government that would include representatives from the princely states. As long as government in the princely states was autocratic, the princely states delegations could be counted upon to be of the princes, who in turn could be expected to support conservative and anti-nationalist policies in the federal legislature. Faced with a coalition of princely state representatives and other non-Congress elements, the Congress could expect to be a minority. By devoting more attention to the movement for freedom in the princely states, it hoped to soften or neutralize, if not capture, their representatives. In the event, the princely states could not make up their minds to join the federation, and a federal legislature never met.

Before this, the Congress policy had begun to shift in 1936, and the Haripura session two years later sanctioned the organization of Congress Committees in princely states provided they undertook neither parliamentary activity nor direct action in Congress's name. By 1939, Gandhi personally backed the States' People's Freedom Movement, as it became known, to the extent of reviewing and guiding all the activities of the Jaipur Praja Mandal (Jaipur People's Society), the popular movement's organization in that state. He was drawn into its activities by his close friend and disciple, a wealthy Rajasthani businessman, longtime Congressman, and treasurer of the Indian National Congress, Jamnalal Bajaj.

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⁵ Pattabhi Sitaramayya, *History of the Indian National Congress*, Delhi, 1969, pp. 106-7.

⁶ *Bombay Chronicle*, 28 June 1939.

As one reflects on the year 1939 and its significance in the histories of the nationalist struggle, one notes the disjunction in the professed ideology and policies of the Congress. At the same time, it is hard to overlook the legislations in the NWFP, where *naubat chaukidari* was done away with. The Agricultural Debtors' Relief Act limited the rate of interest realized by moneylenders and cancelled interest due to creditors on 1 October 1937. In UP, the Tenancy Bill turned out to be the forerunner of the abolition of zamindari in 1952. The other important enactments were the Relief of Indebtedness Act in CP and Berar, and the CP Revision of Tenancy (Amendment) Act. In Madras, the Assembly adopted the Temple Entry Bill. CP's governor admitted that 'there was much in the Congress programme and undoubtedly the Congress as a body was striving towards the objective of a better India.'⁷ Finally serious efforts were made in Orissa to place the tenant in a position of dependence, free from his contract with the landlord, and provide credit and relief from debt.

Notwithstanding the outcry of the Muslim League, some of the Congress ministry's policies benefited the Muslims. This is true of the Rural Development Scheme in UP. In the same province, the Muslims fared well in public services, occupying 39.6 per cent of the posts in the Provincial Executive Service, 25 per cent in the Provincial Executive Service, 25 per cent in the Judicial Service, and 24.4 per cent of Class Positions in the UP Agricultural Service. The story was no different in CP, Bihar, and Bombay. The government in CP allowed Muslim donors to finance Urdu schools for Muslim boys on lines similar to those of Vidya Mandirs and lent official support to them. The Muslims, stated Wylie, the lieutenant governor, in his letter of 18 April 1939 to Linlithgow, 'have hitherto suffered little, if any, serious injustice at the hands of the Congress Ministry'.⁸ The governors of Bihar and Bombay sent out similar reports. They noted that ministers were susceptible to criticisms and were usually anxious to err on the side of generosity wherever 'Muslim interests' were affected. In Madras, the Chakravarti Rajagopalachari ministry extended concessions to educationally and socially backward castes and communities.

The resignation of the ministries abruptly halted the pursuance of the Congress agenda, of clearing the way for the establishment of an egalitarian society. This led to widespread anger and disappointment in certain circles. Meanwhile the breach between the Congress and the government widened to such an extent that Gandhi launched yet another civil disobedience movement in the autumn of 1940. Vinoba Bhave solemnly inaugurated the individual satyagraha movement by delivering an anti-war speech at Punaur, a village near Wardha. Nehru was arrested on 31 October at Chheoki railway station while returning from Wardha. From now on, Gandhi would lift the anti-colonial struggle to new heights by launching the Quit India Movement.

Five year later, the curtain was drawn on 'British India'. In order to understand how and why this occurred, we must keep in mind the happenings in 1939.

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Thanks to the useful inputs of Adnan Faruqi, I drafted this introduction at Bedford Hotel, Paris, during the book fair in the third week of March 2007. I am of course responsible for the errors.

My greatest debt is to Professor Amit Kumar Gupta, a historian of repute, for resurrecting a virtually 'dead' volume. Without his hard work, experience, and commitment this volume would not have seen the light of the day.

⁷ C.P. Governor to Viceroy, 11 August 1939, Linlithgow Papers, Correspondence with the Governor, C.P. and Berar, April–December 1939, Accession No. 2196, NAI.

⁸ C.P. Governor to Viceroy, 18 April 1939, Linlithgow Papers, Correspondence with the Governor, C.P. and Berar, April–December 1939, Accession No. 2196, NAI.

This volume has been in the making for a good number of years. Our work has been facilitated by quite a few scholars, including Indira Gupta, Shubhra Chakravarty, Praveen Saberwal, and Zehra Rashid. I am also grateful to Arif Hussain and Jigar Mohammad, now Professor of History at the University of Jammu.

All the editors owe a great deal to the current Chairman of the ICHR. He has been our chief source of inspiration since he took over as the chief editor of the 'Towards Freedom' project. We also affectionately remember Professor S. Gopal, who initiated and carried forth this project with his scholarly commitment. I dedicate this volume to his memory.

MUSHIRUL HASAN

Abbreviations

AICC	All India Congress Committee
AIKC	All India Kisan Committee
AIKS	All India Kisan Sabha
AISPC	All India States People's Conference
API	Associated Press of India
BPCC	Bengal Provincial Congress Committee
BPKC	Bengal Provincial Kisan Committee
CEC	Chief Executive Committee
CP	Central Provinces
CP	Central Provinces
CPI	Communist Party of India
CrPC	Criminal Procedure Code
CSP	Congress Socialist Party
CSP	Congress Socialist Party
CWC	Congress Working Committee
<i>CWMG</i>	<i>Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi</i>
DCC	District Congress Committee
FICCI	Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce
GOI	Government of India
ICS	Indian Civil Service
INA	Indian National Army (of Subhas Bose)
INC	Indian National Congress
ISC	Indian Signal Corp
MLA	Member Legislative Assembly
NAI	National Archives of India
NMML	Nehru Memorial Museum and Library
NWFP	North West Frontier Province
PCC	Provincial Congress Committee
PO	Petty Officer
PWD	Public Work Department
RI	Rigorous Imprisonment
SWJN	Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru
UP	United Provinces
UPCC	UP Provincial Congress Committee
WC	Working Committee

Calendar of Documents

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1.	Jan 39	Fortnightly Report for the First Half of January 1939	Fortnightly Report, Rajputana, Jaipur, Jodhpur, Kishengarh, first half of January 1939, pp. 12-15	File No. 40-(15)-P/ 1939, Political Department, Government of India (hereafter GOI), Available in History of Freedom Movement Unit, File No. 80/3R IV and V, Set No. XI, NAI 609
2.	11.1.39	Alwar Congress Committee	Letter from Government Alwar to Corfield, Resident at Jaipur	History of Freedom Movement Unit, File No. 80/3 R, IV and V, Set No. VI, NAI 610

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3.	28.1.39	Confidential diary of the Inspector-General of Police, Government of Jodhpur, for the Fortnight ending 28 January 1939	History of Freedom Movement Unit, File No. 80/3R, IV and V, Set No. VI, NAI	611
4.	11.2.39	Ram Singh Bhati to Bhulabhai Desai	AICC Papers, File No. G-35, Part 2, 1939, NMML	612
	14.2.39	Confidential diary of the Inspector-General of Police, Government of Jodhpur, for the Fortnight ending 14 February 1939	History of Freedom Movement Unit, File No. 80/3R, IV and V, Set No. VI, NAI	613
6.	15.3.39	Confidential diary of the Inspector General of Police, Government of Jodhpur, for the Fortnight ending 14 March 1939	History of Freedom Movement Unit, File No. 80/3R, IV and V, Set No. VI, NAI	614
	2.5.39	Fortnightly diary of the Inspector-General of Police, Government of Jodhpur, for the Fortnight ending 14 and 28 April 1939	History of Freedom Movement Unit, File No. 80/3R, IV and V, Set No. VI, NAI	616
8.	5.7.39	Bharatpur State Satyagraha	<i>Hindustan Times</i>	618
9	15.9.39	On Haroti Praja Mandal, Kotah. Police report on the Haroti Praja Mandal, Kotah, sent to the Political Agent, Eastern Rajputana	History of Freedom Movement Unit, File No. 1/3 R, IV & V, NAI	619
10	6.10.39	Satyagraha in Bharatpur	Jugal Kishore Chaturvedi, Publicity Secretary to the President, All India States People's Conference AISPC Papers, Bharatpur Rajya Praja Mandal, Satyagraha Movement in the State for Responsible Government 1939-42, File No. 14, NMML	620

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11.	23.10.39	Note on the Praja Mandal agitation in the Bharatpur State	Note submitted to Major C.W.L. Harvey, Chief Minister of Alwar State	Rajputana State Agency Papers, Roll No. 23, NAI 621
12.	1.12.39	Discontent Brewing in Sirohi State	Typescript, issued by D.P. Singhji, 'For Publicity'	AISPC Papers, File No. 182(ii)/1939, NMML 622
13.	8.12.39	The Marwar Lok Parishad	Jai Narayan Vyas to Jawaharlal Nehru	Miscellaneous Papers of Marwar Lok Parishad, Jodhpur, File No. 2, Bundle No. 4, 1930-45. Jai Narayan Vyas Papers, File No. 5 NMML 623
14.	9.12.39	Agitation in Sirohi	Typescript 'For Favour of Publicity'	AISPC Papers, File No. 182(ii)/1939, NMML 624
15.	21.12.39	Report on Praja Mandal Agitation in Sirohi from August-December 1939	Report submitted by D.P. Singhji, Secretary of the Sirohi Praja Mandal	AISPC Papers, File No. 192(ii)/1939, NMML 624
16.	28.12.39	Political Prisoners' Day	Report on the Praja Mandal agitation in Sirohi from August-December 1939	AISPC Papers, File No. 182(ii)/1939, NMML 626

IV. Gujarat: Baroda and Rajpipla

1.	Jan. 39	Fortnightly Report, Gujarat States, first half of January 1939	Fortnightly Report, Gujarat States, Rajpipla, Cambay, Rewa Kantha, first half of January 1939, pp. 28-33	File No. 40(15)-P/1939, Political Department, available in File No. 80/3 R IV & V, Set No. XI, History of Freedom Movement Unit 626
2.	Jan. 39	Fortnightly Report, Gujarat States, second half of January 1939	Fortnightly Report, Gujarat States, Rajpipla, Cambay, Rewa Kantha, second half of January 1939, pp. 28-33	File No. 40(15)-P/1939, Political Department, available in History of Freedom Movement Unit, File No. 80/3 R IV & V, Set No. XI 628
3.	13.1.39 and 14.1.39	Rajpipla State Reforms		<i>Times of India</i> , 14 January 1939; and <i>Bombay Chronicle</i> 13 January 1949 631

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4.	19.1.39	Fortnightly Report for the first half of January 1939	From the Resident of Baroda and the Gujarat States Agency	File No. 40(8)-P(S)39, Microfilm Roll No. 2, Baroda and Gujarat States Agency Papers, 1939, NAI 632
5	23.1.39	Baroda Praja Mandal's Resolutions		<i>Bombay Chronicle</i> 633
6	23.1.39	Tension in Baroda		<i>Times of India</i> 634
7.	28.1.39	Sardar's statement on Baroda Incidents		<i>Bombay Chronicle</i> 635
8.	2.2.39	Fortnightly Report for the Second Half of January 1939	From the Resident for Baroda and Gujarat States	File No. 40(8)-F(S)/39, Microfilm Roll No. 2, Baroda and Gujarat States Agency Papers, 1939, NAI 637
9.	22.2.39	The Baroda Reforms	Editorial	<i>Bombay Chronicle</i> 638
10	Mar. 39	Fortnightly Report for the First Half of March 1939	Report on the internal situation in Baroda and the Gujarat States for the First Half of March 1939	File No. 40(8)-P(S)/39, Microfilm Roll No. 2, Baroda and Gujarat States Agency Papers, 1939, NAI 639
11.	03.3.39	Rajpipla Reforms		<i>Times of India</i> 639
12.	July 39	Fortnightly Report for the Second Half of July 1939	Report on the internal situation in Baroda and the Gujarat States for the Second Half of July 1939	File No. 40(8)-P(S)/39, Microfilm Roll No. 2, Baroda and Gujarat States Agency Papers, 1939, NAI 640
13.	Sept. 39	Fortnightly Report for the First Half of September 1939	Report on the internal situation in Baroda and the Gujarat States for the First Half of September 1939	File No. 40(8)-P(S)/39, Microfilm Roll No. 2, Baroda and Gujarat States Agency Papers, 1939, NAI 641
14.	Oct. 39	Fortnightly Report for the first half of October 1939: On the internal situation in Baroda and the Gujarat State		File No. 40(8)-P(S)/39, Microfilm Roll No. 2, Baroda and Gujarat States Agency Papers, 1939, NAI 641
Cutch				
1.	8.1.39	Yusuf Meherally to Launch Satyagraha		<i>Congress Socialist</i> 641
2.	8.1.39	Cutch Must Crumble	Article by H.B. Sompal	<i>Congress Socialist</i> 642

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3.	17.1.39	Yusuf Meherally's Meeting with Maharaja of Cutch		<i>Bombay Sentinel</i> 643
4.	19.1.39	Cutch People's Preparations for Satyagraha		<i>Bombay Sentinel</i> 643
5.	25.1.39	Meherally in Villages		<i>Bombay Chronicle</i> 644
6.	27.1.39	Women Picket Pleaders' House		<i>Bombay Chronicle</i> 644
7.	27.3.39	Satyagraha in Cutch State		<i>Bombay Sentinel</i> 645
8.	28.3.39	Kamaladevi's Tribute to Cutch People's Spirit		<i>Bombay Chronicle</i> 645
9.	28.3.39	Kamaladevi's Message to the People of Cutch		<i>Bombay Chronicle</i> 646
10.	31.3.39	All India Cutch Youth Conference		<i>Bombay Chronicle</i> 647
11.	31.3.39	Future of Satyagraha in Cutch		<i>Bombay Chronicle</i> 647
12.	1.4.39	Cutch Satyagraha Suspended		<i>Bombay Chronicle</i> 648
13.	2.4.39	Call Comes to Cutch	Article by Kamaladevi	<i>Congress Socialist</i> 648
14.	18.4.39	Cutch Pleader's Conference		<i>Bombay Chronicle</i> 650
15.	27.4.39	Goondalism in Cutch Village		<i>Bombay Chronicle</i> 651
16.	26.5.39	Meherally's Appeal to Cutch People		<i>Bombay Chronicle</i> 652
17.	28.5.39	Cutch Shows the Way		<i>Congress Socialist</i> 653
18.	19.6.39	Mr Gandhi and Cutch	Yusuf Meherally on Gandhi's article in <i>Haryan</i>	<i>Times of India</i> 654
19.	13.7.39	Cutch People's Movement		<i>Bombay Chronicle</i> 655

V. Sind

Khairpur and Sukkur

1.	15.9.39	Khairpur State People's Grievances	Udhasingh A. Ramachandani to S. Ijazali	AICC Papers, File No. 22, Pt.I/1937-42, pp. 577-78, NMML	655
2.	19.11.39	Grievances of Khairpur Hindus	Resolutions on the Khairpur State passed at the 9th Sind Hindu Conference held at Sukkur	<i>Sind Observer</i>	656

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3.	n.d.	Report of Sukkur-Riots		All India Hindu Mahasabha Papers, File No. C-24, NMML 657
IV. Kathiawar: Rajkot				
1	4.2.39	Gandhi on Struggle in Rajkot		<i>Harijan</i> , CWMG, Vol. 68, pp. 346-48 660
2.	31.1.39	On Rajkot	Gandhi's Statement to the Press	CWMG, Vol. 68, pp. 360-61 661
3.	1.2.39	Rajkot Observes Hartal		<i>Times of India</i> 662
4.	1.2.39	On Rajkot	G.D. Birla to Pyarelal	G.D. Birla, <i>Bapu: A Unique Association</i> , Vol. 3, 1977, pp. 228-29 663
5.	11.3.39	Rajkot		<i>Indian Social Reformer</i> 664
6.	3.2.39	The Rajkot Front	Editorial	<i>Bombay Chronicle</i> 666
7.	4.3.39	Gandhi Starts Fast		<i>Times of India</i> 666
8	4.3.39	All India Rajkot Day Tomorrow		<i>Bombay Chronicle</i> 667
9	4.3.39	Gandhi's Fast	Erskine to Linlithgow (Tel.)	Linlithgow Papers, Correspondence with the Governor of Madras and his Secretary, 1939, Acc. No. 2203, NAI 667
10.	5.3.39	On Rajkot Affairs	B.G. Kher to Roger Lumlay	B.G. Kher Papers, Personal Correspondence of B.G. Kher with the Governor Sir Roger Lumlay September 1937-October 1939, File No. 3, NMML 668
11.	5.3.39	On Rajkot	Zetland to Linlithgow	Zetland Papers, Acc. No. 1969, NAI 668
12.	8.3.39	The Hindu Mahasabha Perspective	Ganpat Rai to B.S. Moonje	All India Hindu Mahasabha Papers, File No. C-21, NMML 669
13.	18.3.39	Gandhi's appeal to the people of Rajkot		<i>Harijan</i> , CWMG, Vol. 69, pp. 44-45 670
14.	10.3.39	On the Viceroy's 'Intervention'	Secretary of State to Viceroy (Tel.)	Linlithgow Papers, No. 75, Private & Personal No. 165, Acc. No. 2161, NAI 671
15.	10.3.39	Reaction to the breaking of Gandhi's fast	H.J. Twynam, Governor of Assam, to Viceroy	Linlithgow Papers, Acc. No. 2174, NAI 671

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17.	15.3.39	Historic Talks		<i>Bombay Chronicle</i>	672
18.	18.3.39	Linlithgow-Gandhi meeting	Linlithgow to Hallet	Hallet Papers, Acc. No. 3948, NAI	673
19.	19.3.39	Follow Up	Article by N.G. Gore	<i>Congress Socialist</i>	674
20.	14.4.39	Mahatma's talks with Muslims		<i>Bombay Chronicle</i>	675
21.	16.4.39	On Reforms Committee		<i>Hindustan Times</i>	675
22.	17.4.39	Angry Demonstrations against Gandhi		<i>Times of India</i>	676
23.	19.4.39	B.R. Ambedkar on Rajkot Committee		<i>Bombay Chronicle</i>	676
24.	19.4.39	Jinnah on the Boycott of Rajkot Committee		<i>Times of India</i>	677
25.	18.4.39	On Rajkot	Zetland to Linlithgow	Zetland Papers, Acc. No. 1969, NAI	678
26.	22.4.39	Rajkot Harijans' Demand		<i>Times of India</i>	678
27.	23.4.39	Illusion of Change of Heart		<i>Independent India</i> Vol. 3, No. 17	679
28.	29.4.39	Gandhi's Statement to the Press		<i>Harijan, CWMG</i> , Vol. 69, pp. 168-71	679
29.	27.4.39	On Gandhi's Statement	Statement issued by K.D. Vaidya on the Rajkot situation	AISPC Papers, File No. 12, Group No. 1, NMML	681
30.	27.4.39	On Rajkot	Linlithgow to Zetland	Zetland Papers, Acc. No. 1967, NAI	681
31.	7.5.39	Choice for Rajkot		<i>Congress Socialist</i>	682
32.	19.5.39	Gandhi Renounces the Gwyer Award		<i>Tribune</i>	683
33.	19.5.39	Inside Rajkot	Editorial	<i>Tribune</i>	685
34.	19.5.39	Wider Reforms for Rajkot		<i>Times of India</i>	686
35.	21.5.39	Lesson o. Rajkot		<i>Congress Socialist</i>	686
36.	22.5.39	On Rajkot	Zetland to Linlithgow	Zetland Papers, Acc. No. 1969, NAI	688
37.	4.6.39	Rajkot Struggle		<i>National Front</i>	688
38.	25.11.39	Gandhi on Rajkot Reforms		<i>Harijan, CWMG</i> , Vol. 70, pp. 366-67	689

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1	10.2.39	Vallabhbhai Patel's statement on Limbdi affairs	<i>Hindustan Times</i>	690
2.	28.2.39	Hundreds Migrating from State	<i>Bombay Chronicle</i>	691
3.	26.2.39	Limbdi shows the line-up	By Shantilal Shah	<i>Congress Socialist</i> 692
4.	2.3.39	On Limbdi	Weekly Confidential Report of the DM, Ahmedabad, Home Department, (Sp), 917(1), 1939, NAI	694
5.	9.3.39	On Limbdi	Weekly Confidential Report of the DM, Ahmedabad, Home Department, (Sp), 917(1), 1939, NAI	695
6.	31.3.39	Disturbances in Limbdi State	Extracts from Report No. 35 of 31 March 1939 from Governor of Bombay, Crown Representative Records, Roll No. 118, NAI	695
7.	5.4.39	Attempt to Divide and Rule	<i>Bombay Chronicle</i>	696
8.	16.4.39	Disturbance in Limbdi State	Letter from Fateh Singh to Resident	Crown Representative Records, Roll No. 118, NAI 697
9.	18.5.39	Reign of Terror in Limbdi State	<i>Bombay Chronicle</i>	697
10.	22.6.39	Gangsterism in Limbdi	Message to the people of Limbdi, Bombay	<i>SWJN</i> , Vol. 9, p. 443 699
11.	31.8.39	Gandhi in Limbdi	<i>CWMG</i> , Vol. 70, pp. 144-45	699
Kathiawar, Palanpur and Junagarh				
1.	Feb. 39	Agitation in Western Indian States Agency	Report on agitation in the Western Kathiawar State	Reel No. 117, Crown Representative Records, NAI 700
2.	13.2.39	Kathiawar Prince's Bid to retain all power	<i>Bombay Sentinel</i>	701

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3.	15.2.39	Palanpur State Affairs	Home Deptt. (Spl.) File No. 917(1), 1939, NAI	702
4.	Jan. 39	Fortnightly Report, Western Indian States, First half of January 1939	Fortnightly Report, Western India States, Rajkot, Junagarh, Nawanagar, Bhavnagar, Dhrangandra, Palitna, Limbdī, Vasavad, Vithalgadh, Chotila Thana, First half of January 1939, pp. 8-11	702
5.	17.1.39	Junagarhites in City Organise	<i>Bombay Chronicle</i>	703
6.	Jan. 39	Fortnightly Report, Western Indian States, Second half of January 1939	File No. 40(15) RR IV & V, Set No. XI, History of Freedom Movement Unit, NAI	704
7.	20.4.39	Farcical Reforms in Palanpur	<i>Bombay Chronicle</i>	705
VII Central India: Indore				
1.	5.2.39	Awakening in Central India States: Indore Praja Mandal's demands	<i>Hitavada</i>	706
2.	29.1.39	Indore Astir	<i>National Front</i>	706
3.	8.7.39	Move of Popular Awakening in Indore	<i>Bombay Chronicle</i>	708
4.	8.12.39	K.L. Vaidya's statement on Indore Praja Mandal	Press Statement AISPC Papers, File No. 106, NMML	708
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1.	27.11.39	Gwalior State Reforms	<i>National Herald</i>	709
2.	3.12.39	The Gwalior Sarvajanik Sabha	S. Gokhale to General Secretary, AISPC AISPC Papers, File No. G-12, 1937-39, NMML. S. Gokhale was General Secretary of the Gwalior Sarvajanik Sabha	710
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1.		Bhopal State People's Conference	AISPC Papers, File No. 18, part 2, NMML	710

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3.	20.4.39	On the Central Indian States	K.D. Vaidya to Jawaharlal Nehru	AISPC Papers, File No. 106, NMML 712
Others				
1.	Jan. 39	On Rewa	Fortnightly Report, Central India Rewa, Bundelkhand, Sohawal, first half of January 1939, File No. 40(15)-P, 1939, Political Department, GOI	File No. 80/3 RIV & V, Set No. XI, History of Freedom Movement Unit, NAI 714
2.	12.2.39	Chhuikhadan State Agitation		<i>Hitavada</i> 715
3.	17.2.39	Repression in Chhuikhadan State		<i>Hitavada</i> 715
4.	3.4.39	States are an Anachronism		<i>Bombay Chronicle</i> 716
5.	6.4.39	On the ruler of Samthar		AISPC Papers, File No. 106, NMML 717
6.	16.5.39	Central India States' People Conference		<i>Bombay Chronicle</i> 718
7.	24.5.39	An Appeal		AISPC Papers, <i>Madhya Bharat</i> , File No. 106, NMML 718
8.	22.4.39	Jobat State and my arrest	Press statement by K.L. Vaidya	AISPC Papers, <i>Madhya Bharat</i> , File No. 106, NMML 719
9.	4.9.39	Affairs in Rajgarh	Kanhaiyalal Vaidya to Rangildas Kapadia	AISPC Papers, File No. 181, Part 2, NMML 720
10.	29.9.39	Affairs in Narsingarh	Kanhaiyalal Vaidya to Rangildas Kapadia	AISPC Papers, File No. 181, part 2, NMML 723
11.	22.11.39	Repression in Central India States		<i>Bombay Chronicle</i> 724
VIII Orissa: Ranpur				
1.		Report on the Ranpur Incident		AICC Papers, File No. G-35, Part 6, 1939, NMML 727
2.	6.1.39	On Major Bazalgette's Death	Statement issued to the Press by Sarandadhar Das, Secretary, Orissa States People Conference	AISPC Papers, File No. 5, NMML 728

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4.	9.1.39	Bose's Warning against use of Violence		<i>Times of India</i> 729
5.	15.1.39	Another Chauri Chaura	Editorial	<i>National Front</i> 730
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1.	6.1.39	Repression in Rajnandgaon		<i>Bombay Chronicle</i> 732
2.	18.1.39	Hare Krushna Mehtab's Statement		<i>Hindu</i> 732
3.	20.1.39	Unrest in Orissa States		<i>Hindu</i> 733
4.	29.1.39	Keonjhar an Eye opener		<i>National Front</i> 733
5.	13.2.39	Congress on Unrest in Orissa States		<i>Hindustan Times</i> 734
6.	27.4.39	Grievances of Orissa States People		<i>Orissa States News Bulletin</i> , AISPC Papers, File No. 127, NMML 734
7.	27.4.39	M.K. Gandhi on Talcher		<i>CWMG</i> , Vol. 69, pp. 268–69 735
8.	16.8.39	Orissa States	Editorial	<i>Bombay Chronicle</i> 736
IX Hyderabad				
1.	2.1.39	The 'Bande Mataram' Controversy	Sir Akbar Hydari talks to the Action Committee	<i>Hindu</i> 737
2.	5.1.39	The 'Bande Mataram' Controversy	Statement issued by the Committee of Action	<i>Hindu</i> 738
3.	11.1.39	Hindu Ma'nsabha's Resolution	B.S. Moonje to Sir Akbar Hydari	File No. 695, Vol. I, Constitutional Affairs Department, Nizam's Government, Andhra Pradesh State Archives. The Moonje-Hydari Correspondence is drawn from the same file. 739

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4.	30.1.39	Hindu Mahasabha Grievances	Akbar Hydari to B.S. Moonje	File No. 695, Vol. I. Constitutional Affairs Department, Nizam's Government, AP State Archives 739
5.	12.2.39	Hyderabad		CWMG, Vol. 68, pp. 407-408 740
6.	Feb. 39	Report on the Internal situation of the Hyderabad State for the first half of February 1939		Fortnightly Report for the first half of February 1939, Hyderabad Residency Records, File No. 49 (2)-P(5), 1939, NAI 741
7.	28.3.39	Anjuman-e Ittehad al-Muslamin Demands		<i>Bombay Chronicle</i> 742
8.	23.4.39	Agitation in Hyderabad	Akbar Hydari to Raja Narendranath	File No. 723, 1939, AP State Archives 742
9.	29.4.39	Agitation in Hyderabad	Raja Narendranath to Akbar Hydari	File No. 723, 1939, AP State Archives 743
10.	9.5.39	Demands by the Hindu Mahasabha: To Safeguard Hindu Interest in the Nizam State		M.S. Aney Papers, Subject File No. 11, 1939-40, Part 2, NMML 746
11.	9.6.39	Hyderabad's Constitution	T.B. Sapru to Akbar Hydari	File No. 740, Constitutional Affairs Department, Andhra Pradesh State Archives 747
12.	18.6.39	Hindu Mahasabha and Hyderabad Satyagraha		M.S. Aney Papers, Subject File No. 11, 1939-40, Part 2, NMML 748
13.	24.6.39	Anti-Hyderabad Agitation	Conron Smith to E.M. Jenkins	File No. 85(c), Delhi State Archives 749
14.	2.7.39	Hindu Mahasabha and Hyderabad Satyagraha	V.D. Savarkar to M.S. Aney	M.S. Aney Papers, Subject File No. 11, 1939-40, part 2, NMML 750
15.	5.7.39	Anti-Hyderabad Agitation in Delhi	E.M. Jenkins to Conran-Smith	File No. 85(c), 1939, Delhi Archives 751
16.	July 39	Hindu Mahasabha and Hyderabad Satyagraha	Dulal Mitra to M.S. Aney	M.S. Aney Papers, Subject File No. 11, 1939-40, Part 2, NMML 753
17.	15.7.39	Jawaharlal Nehru on Feudalism in Hyderabad	Interview to the press	<i>SWJN</i> , Vol. 9, pp.447-48 753

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19.	21.7.39	Muslims Demonstrate Against Hyderabad Reforms		<i>Bombay Chronicle</i>	754
20.	29.7.39	On the Arya Samaj Settlement	Rajagopalachari to Akbar Hydari	Rajagopalachari Papers, File No. 92, NMML	755
21.	2.8.39	Communal Tension in Hyderabad	Akbar Hydari to Rajagopalachari	Rajagopalachari Papers, File No. 92, NMML	756
22.	2.8.39	Hyderabad Reforms	T.B. Sapru to Akbar Hydari	File No. 740, Constitutional Affairs Department Nizam's Government, AP State Archives	757
23.	14.8.39	Hindu Mahasabha and Hyderabad Satyagraha	M.M. Malviya to M.S. Aney	M.S. Aney Papers, Subject File No. 11, 1939-40, part 2, NMML	758
24.	16.8.39	V.D. Savarkar on the Decision of the Arya Samaj Council	Statement to the Press	<i>National Call</i>	758
25.	21.8.39	In the Aftermath of the Hyderabad Agitation	Akbar Hydari to Sapru	File No. 740, Constitutional Affairs Department, Nizam Government, AP State Archives	759
26.	17.9.39	In the Aftermath of the Hyderabad Agitation	Sapru to Akbar Hydari	File No. 740, Constitutional Affairs Department, Nizam Government, AP State Archives	760
27.	18.10.39	Report on the Anti-Reforms	This is a report submitted by Mohammad Mukkhat Ali of the Office of Commissioner for Police.	File No. 786, 1939, AP State Archives	760
28.	19.11.39	All Hyderabad Labour Conference	This is a confidential note prepared by one Mohammad Farhatullah of the First Taluqdar's Office in the Aurangabad district and sent to the Secretary to the Judicial, Police and General departments.	See Judicial, Police and General Depts, Nizam's Government, File No. 53/49F, AP States Archives	762

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1	16.1.39	Peasants March in Kohlapur		<i>Hindu</i> 766
2.	21.1.39	The Peasant in Kohlapur	Extract from the Bombay Province Weekly Letter No. 3, 21 January 1939	Home Deptt. (Sp.), File No. 917(17), 1939, Maharashtra State Record Office 768
3	10.4.39	Kohlapur State's People's First Conference at Kupwad		AISPC Papers, File No. 21, NMML 768
4	9.6.39	Gandhiji's Advice to Kohlapur State Leaders	Questions and Answer of Gandhi and the Deputations	<i>Bombay Chronicle</i> 769
5.	10.6.39	Lull in State will soon pass away	Nehru talks to a deputation of the Kohlapur State Praja Parishad	<i>Bombay Chronicle</i> 770
6.	3.1.39	Aundh Reform Scheme		<i>Hindu</i> 770
7	13.1.39	Constitution for Aundh	Raja of Aundh to B.G. Kher	B.G. Kher Papers, File No. 6, NMML 771
8.	23.1.39	Responsible Government for Aundh		<i>Bombay Chronicle</i> 772
9	1.2.39	Aundh has set example to others	Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru's signed article under the caption 'Aundh' issued to the Press	<i>Tribune</i> 773
10	2 6.39	First Elected Assembly for Aundh Meets		<i>Bombay Chronicle</i> 774
11.	8.6.39	Reforms in Aundh		<i>Bombay Chronicle</i> 774
12.	15.4.39	Playing with Fire	Editorial	<i>Leader</i> 775
13.	16.4.39	The Ramdurg Disturbance		<i>Independent India</i> 777
14.	24.4.39	Gandhi and Popular Violence in Ramdurg		CWMG, Vol. No. 69, pp. 171-73 777
15.	14.5.39	The Ramdurg Tragedy		<i>Independent India</i> 779
XI Mysore				
1.	15.4.39-17.4.39	The Mysore Congress		AISPC Papers, File No. 115(11), 1937-46, NMML 779
2.	3.5.39	Repression in Mysore	Editorial	<i>Bombay Chronicle</i> 782
3.	24.5.39	Reforms in Mysore	Editorial	<i>Bombay Chronicle</i> 783

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4.	19.6.39	Mysore leaders meet Jawaharlal		<i>Bombay Chronicle</i> 784
5.	20.6.39	What Sardar told Mysore Deputation		<i>Bombay Chronicle</i> 785
6.	23.6.39	Mysore Congress Policy	Leader's Statement	<i>Times of India</i> 786
7.	5.8.39	On the Role of Congress Ministers	K. Hanumanthaiya to Vallabhbhai Patel, President, All India Parliamentary Sub-Committee	B.G. Kher Papers, File No. 6, NMML 787
8.	13.9.39	Vasappa Gopi's Appeal to Congressmen		AICC Papers, File No. G-12, 1937-39, NMML. See also <i>Bombay Chronicle</i> , 10, 13 September 1939 788
9.	17.9.39	Report on the situation in Mysore	To Jawaharlal Nehru	AISPC Papers, File No. 13, Group No. 1, NMML 789
10.	4.10.39	The Mysore Struggle	Submitted to the Standing Committee of the States People's Conference by the Mysore Congress Working Committee	AISPC Papers, Mysore (Satyagraha), File No. 115(1), NMML 790
11.	17.10.39	Jawaharlal Nehru's Message to the Mysore State Congress		<i>SWJN</i> , Vol. 10, p. 503 794
12.	6.11.39	Constitutional Reforms		<i>Hindu</i> 794
13.	9.12.39	A Mysore Innovation		<i>Indian Social Reformer</i>
14.	11.11.39	Constitutional Reforms		<i>National Call</i> 797
15.		Satyagraha in Mysore	An account of the Satyagraha movement of 1939 in Mysore	File No. 54/3R VIII, History of Freedom Movement Unit, NAI 798

XII Travancore

1.	6.1.39	The Travancore State Congress	Statement by P. Thanu Pillai	Pattom Thanu Pillai Papers, File No. 4, NMML 799
2.	14.1.39	On Future Programme of State Congress	Statement by P. Thanu Pillai	Pattom Thanu Pillai Papers, File No. 4, NMML 800
3.	28.1.39	Why the Withdrawal	Gandhi's discussion with the deputationists who met him at Shegaon on 15 November 1938	<i>Harijan</i> 802

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4.	12.2.39	The Travancore Affairs	<i>Hindustan Times</i>	804
5.	18.2.39	Gandhi on Travancore Movement	<i>Harijan</i> , M.K. Gandhi, <i>The Indian State's Problem</i> , pp. 167-69	805
6.	15.2.39	All-Travancore Responsible Government Day	<i>Hindu</i>	806
7.	25.2.39	'Travancore Again'—Gandhi	<i>Harijan</i> , CWMG, Vol. 68, pp. 432-34	807
8.	22.2.39	Public Meetings	<i>Hindu</i>	809
9.	22.2.39	Bardoli of Travancore—the Neyyattinkara State Congress	<i>Hindu</i>	809
10.	9.3.39	Call for Civil Disobedience	<i>Times of India</i>	811
11.	18.3.39	Gandhi on Travancore	CWMG, Vol. 68, pp. 453-60	811
12.	19.3.39	Appeal for Civil Disobedience	Statement by Pattom Thanu Pillai after his arrest <i>The Madras Mail</i> , Pattom Thanu Pillai Papers, File No. 5 (newspaper cuttings), NMML	812
13.	19.3.39	Statement by G. Ramachandran	Statement by G. Ramachandran, Member, Council of Action of the Travancore State Congress, in reply to C.P. Ramaswamy Aiyar <i>Hindu</i> , Pattom Thanu Pillai Papers, File No. 5/39 (newspaper cuttings), NMML	812
14.	20.3.39	Call for Civil Disobedience	Statement by Pattom Thanu Pillai, on the eve of his arrest <i>Hindu</i> , Pattom Thanu Pillai Papers, File No. 5, (newspaper cuttings), NMML	816
15.	25.3.39	Read the Signs	Gandhi's Statement to the Press <i>Harijan</i> , CWMG, Vol. 69, pp. 73-75	816
16.	1.4.39	Suspend Civil Disobedience	Gandhi's Statement (after final consultation with Travancore friends' suspending Travancore Satyagraha) <i>Harijan</i> , CWMG, Vol. 69, pp. 78-79	818
17.	24.3.39	Gandhi's lead welcomed in Travancore	<i>Hindu</i>	819
18.	1.4.39	Suspension should Continue	<i>Harijan</i>	819
19.	27.3.39	G. Ramachandran's Statement in Court	<i>Hindu</i> , Pattom Thanu Pillai Papers, File No. 5, (newspaper cuttings), NMML	820

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21.	17.5.39	All Travancore Students Federation		822
22.	15.5.39	State Congress call for boycott of Elections	Resolutions passed by the Travancore State Congress at a meeting held under the presidency of Pattom Thanu Pillai	822
23.	10.6.39	New Technique in Action		824
24.	8.7.39	Travancore Dewan's Terms to State Congress		826
25.	20.7.39	On Prospects of Direct Action	E.M.S. Namboodiripad to Jayaprakash Narayan	827
26.	1.8.39	The Dewan's Defiance		827
27.	11.9.39	Travancore State Congress Conference		828
28.	7.10.39	Unfortunate People of Travancore		829
29.	1.11.39	Responsible Government Day	Press Note issued by the Travancore Government	831
30.	5.11.39	Responsible Government Day		831
31.	11.11.39	Travancore Again		832
32.	4.12.39	Police Excesses and the Travancore State Congress	Statement by C.C. Niroth, President of the Travancore State Congress	833

Chapter 4: Kisan Sabha

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1.	1.1.39	Swami Sahajanand on Gujarat Kisans (from <i>Kisan Bulletin</i>)		835
2.	1.1.39	(a) Zamindar-Kisan Relations in Gorakhpur	An article by Dr Vishwanath Mukherji	835
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3.	6.1.39	Swami Sahajanand in Bombay	Sahajanand tours Bombay	File No. 800(53) BIV, 1939, Home Dept. (Special), Government of Bombay, Maharashtra State Archives 838
4.	8.1.39	The 'Tanka' Movement		<i>National Front</i> 839
5.	9.1.39	Sahajanand administers oath to 40,000 Kisans	Swami Sahajahand Saraswati's speech to the Kisans of Amraoti	<i>Bombay Chronicle</i> 840
6.	13.1.39	Kisan movement in Berar	Statement of M. Deshpande, General Secretary, Vidarbha Kisan Sabha	<i>Hitavada</i> 841
7.	13.1.39	Kisan movement in Bihar	Fortnightly report for the period ending the 13 January 1939	Fortnightly Report, Patna, Home Political File No. 63/1939, Bihar State Archives 843
8.	14.1.39	Congress leaders to declare war on Kisan Sabha: Peasants march on January 26		<i>Bombay Sentinel</i> 844
9.	15.1.39	Bihar Battles for <i>Bakasht</i>		<i>National Front</i> 847
10.	29.1.39	Askote	Article written at Almora, 25 January 1939	<i>National Herald</i> , Reprinted in <i>The Unity of India</i> , London, 1941, pp. 144-46 849
11.	15.1.39	27 Arrested in Mandavi		<i>National Front</i> 850
12.	26.1.39	Gandhi's speech at meeting of peasants		<i>CWMG</i> , Vol. 68, pp. 333-34 851
13.	30.1.39	Kisan Conference at Dhaliwal	Report of a Kisan Conference at Dhaliwal, Kapurthala State, under the presidentship of Arur Singh	<i>Tribune</i> 852
14.	29.1.39	UP affiliates to AIKS		<i>Congress Socialist</i> 852
15.	29.1.39	Gandhi's Speech at meeting of peasants		<i>CWMG</i> , Vol. 68, pp. 345-46 853
16.	1.2.39	Restoration of lands in Ras: Villagers celebrate		<i>Times of India</i> 853

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17.	6.2.39	Kisan Conference at Jalgaon	Extract from Confidential Report of the D.M., East Khandesh	File No. 958, Pt.I/1938-40, Home Dept. (Special), Maharashtra State Archives	854
18.	10.2.39	Awakened peasantry will be helpful to Congress	Prof. Ranga's statement	<i>Tribune</i>	855
19.	11.2.39	The Tenancy Bill	'The Tenancy Bill', Editorial	<i>Bombay Chronicle</i>	856
20.	12.2.39	Battle Royal at Barahiya Tal		<i>National Front</i>	857
21.	15.2.39	Kisan Movement in Berar	Report of a meeting at Amraoti	<i>Hitavada</i>	858
22.	19.2.39	Forward, Andhra Peasants!	By K. Satyanarayana	<i>Congress Socialist</i>	859
23.	19.2.39	'Have Halis Been Freed'?	Indulal Yajnik's article	<i>Congress Socialist</i>	861
24.	26.2.39	Reora Kisans Win	Kisan Satyagraha in Reora	<i>Congress Socialist</i>	863
25.	5.3.39	Muthra Kisans	Resolutions of the Muthra Kisans	<i>Hindustan Times</i>	863
26.	9.3.39	Extract from the weekly confidential report of the District Magistrate, Kaira		Weekly Confidential Report of D.M. Kaira, File No. 937 (6) pt. I/1939, Home Dept., Maharashtra State Archives	864
27.	10.3.39	Kisan March at Tripuri	Kisan March at Tripuri led by Sahajanand	<i>Bombay Chronicle</i>	864
28.	10.3.39	Abolish Zamindari System: All-India Kisan Committee's Demand	Resolutions of the All India Kisan Committee	<i>Bombay Chronicle</i>	865
29.	12.3.39	Gujarat Kisans	From an article by Indulal Yajnik	<i>National Front</i>	865
30.	15.3.39	Report on Political Events in Bihar During the Second half of March 1939		Hallet papers, Acc. No. 3948, NAI	866
31.		Communist Day		Intelligence Branch Reports, Deputy-Commissioner of Police, Calcutta, March-May 1939, Microfilm (4), NAI	867

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32.	19.3.39	Whirlwind of Struggle Sweeps on	Abdul Halim	<i>National Front</i> 869
33.	19.3.39	Kisan Affairs	From the Kisan Bulletin of the All-India Kisan Sabha, 17 March 1939	<i>National Front</i> 870
34.	24.3.39	(a) Kisans Stage Demonstration at Lahore		<i>Tribune</i> 875
	April 39	(b) Kisan Agitation in Lahore, Montgomery and Multan		Fortnightly Reports, First and Second halves of April, 1939, Home Political File No. 18/4/39, NAI 877
35.	24.3.39	The Fourth Kisan Sabha Conference (Gaya)	Statement of Achyuta Nand Prasad, Publicity Officer-in-Charge, 4th Session of the All India Kisan Sabha	<i>Bombay Chronicle</i> 878
36.		Kalipatnam Peasants' Struggle	Kalipatnam Peasants' Struggle by Vasudeva Rao [Pamphlet]	Andhra Congress Socialist Party, Bombay, 1939 879
37.	29.3.39	Congress and the Kisan	Statement of the President of the Andhra Pradesh Kisan Sabha and Secretary of the Andhra Pradesh Congress Socialist Party on the resolution of the Working Committee of the Andhra Pradesh Congress Committee	Kalipatnam Satyagraha, Bezawada, 1939 881

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38.	2.4.39	'Kisan Movement—Reviews and Tasks'	An Article by P.C. Joshi	<i>National Front</i> 883
39.	2.4.39	Welcome to Gaya	Sahajanand Saraswati's address at Gaya	<i>Congress Socialist</i> 888
40.	3.4.39	2,000 Peasants March to Town		<i>Leader</i> 889
41.	3.4.39	Bihar Zamindari Estates		<i>Leader</i> 889
42.	5.4.39	Ranga's message to Gujarat Kisan Conference	Report of the Conference	<i>Bombay Chronicle</i> 889
43.	7.4.39	Agrarian Situation in Bihar	Hallet to Linlithgow	Hallet Papers, Acc. No. 3948, NAI 890
44.	7.4.39	Sahajanand's call to Gujarat Kisans		<i>Bombay Chronicle</i> 891

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45.	7.4.39	Women Throng Kisan Conference		<i>Bombay Chronicle</i> 892
46.	9.4.39	All-India Kisan Conference (Subjects Committee) Meeting		<i>Searchlight</i> 893
47.	10.4.39	Settlement between Congress and Zamindars not difficult, opines Raja of Darbhanga	Maharajadhiraja of Dharbhanga's presidential speech at the All India Landholders Conference, Lucknow	<i>Bombay Chronicle</i> 895
48.	10.4.39	Role of the Kisan Sabha	Jadunandan Sharma's address to the All India Kisan Conference	<i>Bombay Chronicle</i> 895
49.	10.4.39	Ministers must not resent criticism: Narendra Dev's complaint	Narendra Dev's presidential speech at the All-India Kisan Sabha Conference	<i>Bombay Chronicle</i> 896
50.	13.4.39	Split among Zamindars		<i>Bombay Chronicle</i> 897
51.	14.4.39	Kisan movement in Bihar		Fortnightly Report for the period ending 22 March 1939, File No. 1, NAI, Bihar State Archives 898
52.	15.4.39	Peasant Awakening in Kerala	'Peasant Awakening in Kerala' by A.K. Gopalan	<i>Bombay Chronicle</i> 899
53.	15.4.39	Chhindawara Kisan Conference	R.K. Jalodokar's statement on the Chhindawara Kisan Conference	<i>Bombay Chronicle</i> 901
54.	16.4.39	Kisans should strengthen the Congress—Jawaharlal Nehru	Speech of Jawaharlal Nehru at a meeting of Kisans at Karchana in Allahabad district	<i>SWJN</i> , Vol. 9, pp. 334–35 902
55.	17.4.39	Agrarian Unrest in Sind	Congress appeals on behalf of tenants in Sind	<i>Bombay Chronicle</i> 903
56.	18.4.39	Miraculous Resurrections		<i>Behar Herald</i> 904
57.	April 39	Report on political events in Bihar during the first half of April 1939		Hallett Papers, Acc. No. 3948, NAI 904
58.	26.4.39	Petty Zamindars need not fear	Sahajananda's statement on petty zamindars	<i>Bombay Chronicle</i> 906
59.		(a) Activities of the All-Malabar Peasants' Union	From Intelligence Bureau Report, entitled, 'Communist Activity Amongst the Peasants in Malabar'	Home Political, File No. 7/9/41, NAI 907

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	27.4.39	(b) Anti- <i>Janmi</i> Agitation	Extract	<i>National Front</i> 910
60.	4.5.39	Report on political events in Bihar during the second half of April 1939		Hallett Papers, Acc. No. 3948, NAI 911
61.	7.5.39	Satyagraha by Kisans		<i>Amrita Bazar Patrika</i> 912
62.	8.5.39	On the Barahiya Tal Agrarian Dispute		Extracts from the Government of Bihar, Special Section, Confidential File No. 29(VII)/1939, Bihar State Archives 913
63.	11.5.39	Agrarian Reform	V.K.R.V. Rao speaks on agrarian reform at Poona	<i>Bombay Chronicle</i> 915
64.	14.5.39	<i>Bakasht</i> Land Struggle: Reora, Barahiya Tal	Indulal Yajnik	<i>National Front</i> 916
65.	17.5.39	Congress policy criticized	Karad Taluqa's Political Conference held at Kala	<i>Times of India</i> 919
66.	18.5.39	Kisan Procession in Mandvi		Extract from weekly confidential report of District Magistrate, Surat, File No. 800(53) BIV, 1939, Home Deptt. (Spl.) Government of Bombay, Maharashtra State Archives 919
67.	22.5.39	Report on the political events in Bihar for the first half of May 1939		Hallet Papers, Acc. No. 3948, NAI 920
68.	27.5.39	Kher's tribute to Kanara peasants' sacrifices		<i>Bombay Chronicle</i> 922
69.	28.5.39	Kisans' Cry for Bread		<i>Congress Socialist</i> 923
70.	31.5.39	Zamindars Vs. Kisans		<i>Amrita Bazar Patrika</i> 924
71.	1.6.39	Punjab District Kisan Committee decides on Satyagraha		<i>Hindustan Times</i> 925
72.	4.6.39	Kangra Peasants' Conference		<i>Hindustan Times</i> 926
73.	5.6.39	Summary report of the Agriculturists Conference held at Naydongri	Resolutions of the Agriculturists Conference held at Naydongri	Weekly Confidential Report, 1939, Maharashtra State Archives 927

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74.	8.6.39	Report of the political events in Bihar during the second half of May 1939	Hallet Papers, Acc. No. 3948, NAI	929
75.	30.6.39	All India Kisan Prisoners' Day on 9 July 1939	<i>Bombay Chronicle</i>	931
76.	9.6.39	(a) Munagala: Andhra Peasants Fight For Land	<i>National Front</i>	932
	10.6.39	(b) Munagala Satyagraha, 110 Ryots arrested	<i>Krishna Patrika</i>	933

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	9.7.39	(c) Munagala Kisan Struggle	Sharaf Athar Ali	<i>National Front</i>	934
77.	13.6.39	Fortnightly Report for the period ending 13 June 1939		Fortnightly report for the period ending 13 June 1939, File No. 1, Bihar State Archives	937
78.	15.6.39	Nawadha Kisan Conference		<i>Searchlight</i>	938
79.	15.6.39	Indian Peasants Congress at Gaya		<i>News India</i>	938
80.	21.6.39	Henry Craik to Linlithgow		Linlithgow Collection, Acc. No. 2240, NAI	941
81.	22.6.39	Plight of the Farmers of Benaras District	Statement of the District Congress Committee	<i>Aaj</i> (Hindi Daily)	942
82.	22.6.39	Report on the political events in Bihar during the first half of June 1939		Hallet Papers, microfilm, Acc. No. 3948, NAI	943
83.	23.6.39	All-India Kisan Sabha Executive meets		File No. 806(53) BIV, 1939, Home Dept. (Special), Government of Bombay, Maharashtra State Archives	946
84.	29.6.39	Extract from the weekly confidential report of the District Magistrate, Surat		Home Dept. (Spl.), File No. 800(53), B IV, 1939, Government of Bombay, Maharashtra State Archives	947

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85.	July 39	Kisan Sabha, The Common Platform for Gandhites and Socialists	Article by N.G. Ranga	<i>Modern Review</i> , Vol. LXVI, pp. 66-69	948
86.	6.7.39	Report on political events in Bihar during the second half of June 1939		Hallet Papers, microfilm, Acc. No. 3948, NAI	952
87.	6.7.39	Congress and the Kisan Sabha	Editorial	<i>Indian Nation</i>	954
88.	8.7.39	Kisan Sabha Faces Crisis		<i>Bombay Chronicle</i>	954
89.	7.7.39	Congress and the Kisans	Extract from the weekly confidential report of D.M. East Khandesh, 7 July 1939	Home Department (Special), File No. 800(53), BIV, 1939, Government of Bombay, Maharashtra State Archives	955
90.	16.7.39	<i>Bakasht</i> Problem	Editorial	<i>Indian Nation</i>	955
91.		On the <i>Bakasht</i> Problem in Bihar	Note on the nature of the <i>Bakasht</i> problem in Bihar	File No. 28(VII)/1939, Special Section, Government of Bihar, Bihar State Archives	956
92.	27.7.39	Amended Kisan Sabha Constitution		<i>Bombay Sentinel</i>	958
93.	28.7.39	Harnhar Prasad to M.N. Roy		File No. 3, Part X, Bihar 1938-40, M.N. Roy Papers, NMML.	959
94.	17.8.39	Tragedy of the Kisans		<i>Bombay Sentinel</i>	960
95.	6.9.39	Action Against Sahajananda		<i>Amrita Bazar Patrika</i>	962
96.	6.9.39	On the condition of the Peasantry: A summary report of the meeting held at Pimpalgaon Taluka, Malegaon District, on 5 September 1939	G.B. Bhutekar's speech at Pimpalgaon, Malegaon Taluka	Weekly Confidential Reports, 1939, Maharashtra State Archives	963
97.	17.9.39	Delhi Peasants present their demands	Demands of Delhi Peasants	<i>Hindustan Times</i>	964
98.	28.9.39	Abolition of Landlordism and Land Revenue System demanded		<i>Bombay Chronicle</i>	964

<i>S.No.</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Documents</i>	<i>Source</i>	<i>Pg No.</i>
99.	28.9.39	Indulal Yajnik Addresses Meetings	Weekly Confidential Reports of the Collector of Surat, File No. 800 (53)BV 1939, Government of Bombay, Maharashtra State Archives	965
100.	Nov. 39	On Peasant grievances	Summary report of a public meeting held at Bhal village on 9 November 1939	966
101.		Police <i>Zulum</i>	AICC Papers, File No. P-12(Part I)/ 1939-40, NMML	967

Chapter 1. The Ministries at Work (1939)

1. The Sind Ministry

Bombay Chronicle, Editorial, 9 January 1939¹

9 January 1939

The succession of sensations today including the resignation of Sir Ghulam Hussain Hidayatullah² from the leadership of the Sind Muslim League Assembly Party, the Ministry's flat refusal to the Congress terms for a compromise over the assessment and the rumours of expansion of the Cabinet and denials of the same rumours have made the Monday that ended on January 9, a day of sensations in the history of Sind.

The Congress Assembly Party met this evening to consider the Premier's letter in connection with the assessment orders.³ After some discussion the party resolved to remain neutral till January 28 and thereafter resume their freedom of action on the basis of the Wardha decision of the Congress High Command. The result of this resolution is that in the debate over the "No Confidence" motion⁴ tomorrow, the Congress Party will remain neutral.

Ghulam Hussain Hidayatullah's announcement in the Assembly resigning from this leadership of the Muslim League Party has come as a veritable "bombshell" for the Party for which it does not seem to have been prepared at all. Since he left for his residence from the Assembly Hall after making this statement, frantic efforts are being made to persuade him to withdraw his resignation even on the inducement that he would be installed as Premier if the Allabux⁵ Ministry fell.

The greater surprise of the day is the Premier's letter to the Congress Party⁶, which has shocked the Congress Members and the Hindu Members who have been taken aback.

Khan Bahadur Allabux when informed about the repercussions of his decision to enforce the assessment proposals in, toto told the "United Press" that there was no bargaining with him with any party or group on the issue. He would stand or fall on the merits of the proposals.

Referring to the possibilities of expansion of the Cabinet he declared that at the moment he was not going in for an expansion of the Cabinet.

¹ The separation of Sind from the Bombay Presidency, combined with the constitutional changes embodied in the Act of 1935, intensified political activity in the newly created Province. The Muslim League had limited influence: it fared poorly in the elections of 1937 and emerged with no seats. The results were dominated instead by local Muslim political parties, namely the Sind Azad Party, the Sind United Party and the Sind Muslim Political Party, which between themselves won nearly all of the Muslim seats in the Sind legislative Assembly. While the Sind United Party won most seats, its leader, Seth Haji Abdullah Haroon and deputy leader, Shah Nawaz Bhutto, failed to be elected. Under these circumstances, the Governor of Sind called upon Sir Ghulam Hussain Hidayatullah, leader of the Sind Muslim Party, to form a ministry instead.

On 17 March 1938, Hidayatullah resigned. A new opposition group prepared to accept the League's overall leadership.

² Ghulam Hussain Hidayatullah (1878–1948) was born into a zamindar family of Shikarpur in Sind. He graduated from the University of Bombay in 1901 and returned to Sind to hold high positions in the municipality and the local board. He was minister for local self-government in the Bombay Government from 1921 to 1928 before assuming charge as the first Premier of Sind. After India's Partition in August 1947, he was the first Governor of Sind.

³ 'The story of assessment proposals is', stated G.M. Syed in the legislative assembly debate on 10 January 1939, 'a very poignant one'. The Chief Minister, Allah Bakhsh, was indicted for having enhanced the burden of the agriculturists. The Congress in Sind opposed the new system of taxation at its meeting on 16 July 1938. The three features of the assessment orders—sliding scale, representative-grouping and assessment on miscellaneous crop—were subjected to scathing criticism.

⁴ The no-confidence motion was introduced on 10 January 1939 by G.M. Syed. After a prolonged debate, the motion was defeated on 12 January by an overwhelming majority. The Congress members, as expected, remained neutral. The debate on assessment proposals continued, as on 23 and 25 January. The following summary of the legislative assembly proceedings, published in *Indian Annual Register*, Vol. 1, pp. 285–286, sets out the main issues in the debate.

The Congress Party's resolution on the Government's assessment proposals stated: 'The Assembly, having considered the Government resolution regarding the revision of settlement in the Barrage area, is of opinion that the rates of assessment on cotton and other commodities are an increase on the khatedars and encroaches on their means of subsistence. The Assembly, therefore, suggests the rates of the last settlement on cotton be charged when the average price per maund of lint desi cotton at Karachi is Rs 18 and American cotton Rs 21. These rates, corresponding to the above prices, be considered as the datum line. With every fall or rise above average prices, rates of assessment in cotton should fall or rise proportionately, subject to a minimum rate of Rs 5 and a maximum rate of Rs 10 per acre. Secondly, the Government, having ignored the fall in price in fixing the rates of assessment for wheat, the new rates be reduced in proportion to the fall in price from the figure taken as the basis for the last settlement. Thirdly, with a view to encouraging the growing of fruits and vegetables be charged as under the last settlement. And fourthly, the present division of lands into three groups being unscientific and unjust, a detailed classification of land be undertaken, regard being had to the fertility for the soil and, till that is done, the groupings of last settlement may not be changed'. Mr Issardas Varandmal (Congress, representing Indian Commerce), moving the main resolution, made it clear that the Congress was anxious to meet the Government more than half-way and so to reshape the proposals as to make them acceptable to the House. The Revenue Minister, upholding the Government's proposals, observed that the scheme was framed so as to benefit the Province as a whole and assured the House that, as far as regrouping was concerned, a satisfactory arrangement would be made at the next settlement, for which the Government would appoint a Special Officer who would undertake classification of lands. Mr Jamshed Mehta, supported the Government's scheme of a sliding scale in which they had taken the yield, price, outturn, and other factors into consideration. Moreover, the water rate there was uniform and the assessment was based on profit. The Government proposals, if put into effect, would yield an additional revenue of eight lakhs only and the argument that they would affect agriculturists to a great extent would not hold good. The Congress spokesman said that the Government proposals affected small khatedars all over Sind numbering two lakhs and if the Government wanted to increase revenue he suggested other means, for example, an agricultural income tax. Next day, the 25th January, a Congress resolution, which had the backing of the Muslim League on the Government's assessment proposals was defeated by 30 votes to 20. At the conclusion of the debate, the Premier announced slight modifications in the original proposals regarding the cotton sliding scale, conceding the principle of giving reductions when prices go below the minimum fixed. The Premier also assured the house that Government would examine any glaring cases of injustice regarding regrouping.

Allah Bakhsh Samroo (1897–1943) belonged to a leading zamindar family of Shikarpur in Upper Sind. He was actively connected with local boards and municipalities in his early public life and rose to become the Premier of Sind after the fall of Ghulam Hussain Hidayatullah's Ministry in 1938. Allah Bakhsh was for Muslim unity. He presided over the Azad Muslim Conference at Delhi in April 1942, where a resolution against the demand for Partition was adopted. And on 26 September of that year, he renounced his titles in protest against the 'imperialistic hold on India' and the British policy of using political and communal differences to perpetuate their domination.

⁵ See *Tribune*, 8 January 1939, for the text of the letter.

2. The Sind Ministry

Bombay Chronicle, Editorial, 11 January 1939

11 January 1939

The latest developments as they are, are startling. Premier Allah Bakhsh, after angling for support for months together in all possible quarters, seems to have got a good haul indeed in the person of

none else and none less that Ghulam Hussain Hidayatullah, the ex-premier, the sworn enemy of the present Ministry and, last but not least, the leader of the local Muslim League Party. With him to cross over to their erstwhile enemy's camp is Mir Bandeh Ali Khan,¹ a former Minister and another prominent opponent of the Allah Bakhsh Cabinet. It is presumed that Premier Allah Bakhsh has decided to take a leaf out of the book of his Bengal Conference and to buy over the opposition by offering ministerships and parliamentary secretaryship right and left. He is expected to command 40 out of the 60 votes in the Sind Assembly and thus to have an even keel at last.

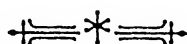
It goes without saying that Premier Allah Bakhsh scored a Machiavellian success over his rivals and opponents. By the same token it is a success which can hardly be called honourable. The "volte face" which he has executed finally exposes his real character and proves that the overriding consideration, which has prompted his actions and utterances all these months, is solely to retain his Premiership. The curt reply that he has given to the leader of the Congress group regarding the assessment orders shows very clearly that he now feels himself sufficiently strong to do without Congress support. We shall not be surprised if he finally throws away the pseudo-Congress garb which he has donned for some time. Regarding Sir Ghulam Hussain's somersault, the less said the better. We only feel sorry that a man who has enjoyed high office so long should, even in the evening of his life, be so enamoured of power as to disown his party as well as principles. Political opportunism cannot go further than it has done in Sind. The defection of Sir Ghulam has, however, the greatest lesson for Jinnah.² The edifice which Jinnah raised in Karachi³ has come down like a pack of cards.

So far as the Congress group in the Legislature is concerned, it will gain more than it will lose as a result of the ministerial transformations. It will doubtless lose what at one time seemed a good chance of maintaining a Ministry on more or less Congress lines. But with a Premier who has always been elusive and has now proved to be so unreliable this would have been a very embarrassing task, with a serious risk of compromising Congress principles. There is no such risk now, though, on the other hand, the Ministry will not be very amenable to Congress influence. However, so long as the Congress group remains scrupulously loyal to its own pledged policy, it will not fail to exert a wholesome influence on the Government, though it may not be openly acknowledged by them. It will have to support or oppose measures on their merits, always seeking to safeguard particularly the interests of the masses. Fortunately, neither the Cabinet nor the Opposition will be run on purely communal lines and the Congress Party should strive to discountenance communalism in every sphere. In no circumstances will it be possible for the new Cabinet to flout the Congress.

¹ Mir Bandeh Ali Khan of Talpur was in the forefront of an agitation over the return of a domed building in Sukkur on the grounds that it had once been used as a mosque. He replaced Allah Bakhsh's pro-Congress Ministry, which collapsed following the November 1939 satyagraha. His ministry, which eventually fell in 1941, included Muslim Leaguers like M.A. Khuhro, G.M. Syed, and Shaikh Abdul Majid Sindhi.

² Mohammad Ali Jinnah (1876-1948); founder of Pakistan; educated at Sind Madrasa High School, Karachi; called to the Bar in England in 1896; worked as Private Secretary to Dadabhai Naoroji some years after his return to India in 1896; and played a critical role in negotiating the Lucknow Pact in December 1916. Jinnah drifted from the Congress after the Congress adopted the Non-co-operation resolution in September 1920 and emerged as a champion of 'Muslim interests'. He attended the Round Table Conference in London and returned to India in 1934 to revive the All-India Muslim League. He spearheaded the movement for India's Partition on the basis of the 'two-nation theory' which he first propounded at the Lahore session of the Muslim League in March 1940.

³ At the Sind Provincial League Conference held in Karachi in October 1939.



3. The Ayodhya Conference and the UP Congress Ministry:

Harry Haig¹ to Linlithgow, 10 January 1939

Haig Papers, Microfilm Roll No. 1, NMML

My dear Lord Linlithgow,

I returned after my Christmas camp direct to Allahabad, and, as I mentioned in my last letter, I shall be based in Allahabad for the whole of this month. It makes a pleasant change to come here, and there is no doubt that the people generally appreciate very much this annual visit of the Governor. It is also useful to me, for it brings me in touch with the High Court, the Public Service Commission, the University, and a somewhat different atmosphere of politics and politicians to that which prevails at Lucknow.

2. The Christmas holiday was of course the occasion for important conferences and many resolutions. So far as our Provincial politics are concerned, the most important event was the big political conference held at Ayodhya near Fyzabad.... The Ministry escaped censure, but the praise of them was very faint, and Jawaharlal Nehru, in speaking on the resolution referring to their work, said that the resolution was not for congratulating the Ministers; it only appreciated their difficulties and the work done despite them. He said that the pace of progress was very slow and they were dissatisfied with the distance they were from their objective. It might be thought from the tone of these remarks that Nehru was a hostile critic; but from conversations I have had here, I believe it to be true that in fact his influence was used to protect the Ministry from excessive criticism and from the passing of unpractical resolutions. I think that Nehru's immediate intention is, as it was a year ago, to keep the Ministry in office and to shield them from the more embarrassing attacks made upon them by the extremists. But at the same time, I think he does not fail to urge them on to more advanced policies. It seems to me probable, both from Nehru's utterances and from what I hear of his intentions, that he is looking forward to the time when he will secure his very comprehensive objectives by means of some movement that the British Government will not be able to resist. But in the meantime he does not underestimate the great value to the Congress cause of having Congress Ministries in office side by side with the development of Congress activities and sanctions, such as volunteers, outside the Government sphere. Incidentally, I was told a few days ago on what ought to be good authority, that a movement has recently developed for pressing Nehru for the Presidentship of the Congress, and that this may have a considerable amount of support behind it.

3. I am not at present in a position to judge what the effect of the Ayodhya conference will be upon the Ministry. I have, however, received one bit of information which is not very encouraging. I have written in previous letters about the left wing proposal that rents should be drastically reduced. The figure previously mentioned, which I regarded as unreasonable and unpractical, was 6½ crores, vide para 4 of my letter No. U-P-206 dated 6 December 1938. The Ayodhya conference demanded a reduction of rents by 8 crores, I heard two days ago from the Revenue Secretary that Chhatari² had been told by the Premier that the left wing were demanding a reduction of 8 crores that he would have to give them something. Chhatari's impression was that he was considering giving 6½ to 7 crores. The Revenue Secretary also tells me that the Revenue Minister had in his presence told the Finance Minister of Bihar that the Tenancy Bill would cost the Government 50 to 100 lakhs in land revenue. I do not at the moment attach too much importance to this report. While the Ayodhya conference is still fresh in their minds, the Ministers are bound to be considerably influenced by it. It may be, however, that as they get further away from it, they will take a more reasonable view of what is possible. The Revenue Minister also announced at the Ayodhya conference that all the stayed arrears of rent were going to be wiped out. This however

can only be done by legislation, and no Bill has so far been drafted with this object. After this public statement, however, the ministry will I imagine have to proceed with this matter without much delay. At present the whole of their legislative time is entirely occupied by the Tenancy Bill.³ They have passed about 45 clauses out of something over 300. I doubt myself whether the Bill is likely to be through the Assembly till late in February.

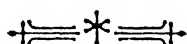
4. I was greatly interested in the comments you made in para 3 of your letter of 22 December 1938 on the character and attitude of Pant.⁴ I myself am in agreement with Your Excellency's general estimate. I will not go into details, for I am sending you within the next few days a fairly detailed appreciation of his character in response to your request for information about all my Ministers. There is no doubt that when confronted with difficulties, he is indecisive and that he cannot make up his mind to take firm line in opposition to the left wing. The Cawnpore situation, to which your Excellency refers, is a very good illustration of his qualities and defects. Faced with a difficult situation during the strike he handled it, I agree, with skill and tact. But, as I think my previous letters have often pointed out, he missed opportunities at a much earlier stage of dealing with the Cawnpore situation firmly and equitably. Had he taken those opportunities, I doubt whether any strike would have materialized. One may put to his credit that on the whole peace has been preserved in Cawnpore for the last eighteen months; but Cawnpore has been in a state of constant unrest ever since he took office, and making all allowance for his good qualities, I think his own policy is very largely to blame for that. He is essentially a conciliator, and not a dictator, or even a strong democratic leader. What you say about his not having established himself in the inner ring of the Congress is, I agree, significant. But when all is said and done, we have to take facts as they are. With all his defects he is the only possible right wing leader in this Province, and in fact he stands out head and shoulders above the others. As I said in my recent appreciation of the situation, the only alternative to him is a left wing Premier. And while one is at times impatient with his attitude, it is important to give full weight to his difficulties. I very much doubt whether in any other Province the Provincial Congress Committee is largely, and perhaps predominantly, opposed to the policy of the Ministry. This is emphatically the case here. The Provincial Congress Committee is the party organisation, and when a very large proportion, possibly even a majority of them is opposed to the Ministry in the sense of wanting them to go much further, it does not require any argument to show how difficult the position of the ministry becomes. A stronger man might have dealt with the situation more effectively; but that it is an exceedingly difficult situation for anybody has, I think, to be admitted....

¹ Henry (Harry) Graham Haig (1881–1956); educated at Winchester and New College, Oxford; entered the ICS in 1905; served in various departments until his appointment as secretary to the government of India in the Home department (1926–30); Home member of the Viceroy's Council (1932–34); Governor of UP from 1934 to 1939.

² Mohammad Ahmad Said Khan (1899–1982), the Nawab of Chhatari, belonged to a landowning family of Bulandshahr district in UP. He was elected member of the UP Legislative Council (1920), Minister of Industries (1923–25), Home member of the Governor's Executive Council (Jan. 1926–1933), and acting-Governor of UP (June–August 1928 and April–November 1933.) He was the chief architect of the National Agriculturist Party in UP and closely associated with the Aligarh Muslim University.

³ The UP Tenancy Act, XVIII of 1939, was the most important measure put through by the UP Congress Ministry of 1937–39. Proposals for legislation were first announced in mid-January 1938.

⁴ Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant (1887–1961) started his public life in 1912, when he first entered the UP legislative council. He then rose to become a key figure in national and provincial politics. He was the first Chief Minister in UP under the Act of 1935, a position he held with distinction on several occasions until his death on 7 March 1961.



APPENDIX

Proceedings of the UP Assembly

Winter Session, Lucknow, 3rd January to 21st February 1939.

The UP Tenancy Bill

The UP Legislative Assembly re-assembled after the X'mas holidays on the 3rd January 1939 and resumed consideration of the Tenancy Bill. It passed Clause 21 which specified what classes of tenants would enjoy hereditary right. Only one drafting amendment, moved by Mr *Phool Singh* (Congressite), was accepted by the Government, and most others, emanating from the *Opposition* benches, were opposed and rejected by the House. There was one division in the course of the day one, an amendment seeking to confer hereditary rights on sub-tenants of tenants-in-chief whose holding exceed 20 acres of land. It was negatived by 75 votes to 19. An amendment urging that sub-tenants of fixed rate tenants should also acquire hereditary rights if they were in possession for a continuous period of five years at the commencement of this Act, was moved and withdrawn by Kunwar *Sir Maharaj Singh*. Another amendment, which was also withdrawn, was moved by the Nawab of Chhatai. It provided that hereditary rights should be conferred if a tenant had paid his rent in full for three years continually to the landlord. In supporting this amendment, Nawab *Sir Muhammad Yusuf* warned the Government that the next three years would be critical years for the Government as the process of ejectment proposed in the Bill would be so ineffective and worthless that zamindars would never be able to realise their rents. Next day, the 4th January, Clauses 22 to 29 of the Bill were passed and nearly 50 amendments on the order paper were disposed of. The Opposition fought hard to prevent the accrual of hereditary rights in lands situated in a municipality, notified or town area as well as in lands owned by any educational institution, but their amendments were rejected by the House. Similarly, the House negatived two other amendments moved against hereditary rights accruing in uneconomic holdings. In the afternoon an amendment was moved by the Government which the Revenue Minister described as an enabling clause in connection with the sale of the tenant's holding for the arrears of rent. He promised to place the Government's proposals on this matter before the House in two or three days and added that it was contemplated that land should revert to the original tenant after an interval of four or five years during which period the auction-purchaser would have realised his outlay. Next day, the 5th January, only two clauses relating to succession of tenants could be disposed. Muslim League members, one and all, wanted Muslim Personal Law to apply to Muslim tenancies and they threatened that if this was not agreed to by the Government, this would be one of the charges against the Congress Government of the province showing that the Government was causing hardship to Muslims. The Revenue Minister succeeded in unnerving the opposition by stating how Muslims outside the Assembly Chamber did not want Muslim Personal Law to apply to tenancy and quoted from the reports of the committees appointed on the subject in 1901 and 1926, which had Muslim majorities and which opposed the proposal. He also quoted the opinions received by the Government on the Bill not only from Muslims in general but several from even Muslim League and members of those bodies. All of them had been published and supplied to members and were opposed to the Shariat law being applied to tenancies. A number of amendments were made in the table of succession, giving rights of succession to step-mothers, grandfathers of deceased tenants and confining these rights to unmarried daughters and to widows so long as they did not remarry. Begum Habibullah and Begum Shahid Hussain strongly criticised the Government for trying to curtail the rights of women, but the Government's contention was that they had drawn up the table in the best interests of agriculture and in order to prevent

fragmentation of holdings. Three divisions were claimed by the Opposition to-day—twice on amendment and once on the adoption of the whole of Clause 30. All were defeated by large majorities. Next day, the 6th January, the House made rapid progress and finished consideration of Clauses 32, 33 and 34. Mr A.P. Jain, Parliamentary Secretary to the Revenue Minister, moved four amendments to Clause 32, which dealt with succession to women holding inherited interest. These amendments, he said, were consequential on the changes made in the table of succession in an earlier clause. The amendments were accepted. Certain other consequential and verbal amendments to clause 33 moved by the Government were also accepted by the House. This clause dealt with question of succession to women tenants, other than those mentioned in the previous clause. Clause 35, relating to the rights of tenants to sublet holdings, was taken into consideration. Raja Bisheshwar Dayal Seth moved an amendment to the effect that a tenant could sublet a holding otherwise than in accordance with the provisions of this Act, with the consent of the zamindar. The amendment also provided that no subtenant should acquire or enjoy any rights in a holding in excess of the rights held by the tenant-in-chief. The Government opposed the amendment, which was rejected. The Raja of Tirwa moved that a tenant and a subtenant should be jointly and severally liable for rent due from a tenant to the landlord. This amendment was also opposed by the Government and was rejected and Clause 35 was passed without amendment. During discussion of Clause 36, Raja Bisheshwar Dayal Seth moved an amendment, restricting the sub-letting of a holding to a period of two years instead of five, as provided in the Bill. Mr Shaukat Ali moved that the period be three years instead of five. Both amendments were rejected and Clause 36 was adopted with minor official amendments. Raja Bisheshwar Dayal Seth moved an amendment to Clause 37 to make it clear that a tenant should sub-let his holding at the commencement of the agricultural year only. The amendment also laid down the provision that before a holding was sub-let, the tenant should, by a notice in writing to the landholder, inform him of the proposed sub-tenant, the number of plots proposed to be sub-let and the rent payable for such sub-lease before the commencement of the agricultural year. The amendment was negatived and Clause 37 was passed. Raja Bisheshwar Dayal Seth's motion to add a new clause to the Bill was rejected. Clauses 39 and 40 were passed with minor official amendments and Clause 41 was passed without amendments. At this stage, the House adjourned until Monday, the 9th January, when it passed clauses 43, 44 and 45 dealing with the extinction and division of tenancies and the exchange of land. A very lengthy amendment was moved by Raja Bisheshwar Dayal Seth for retention of the landlord's right to acquire a holding for agricultural development and such other purposes as erecting mills or factories after payment of compensation. The amendment was strongly opposed by the Government on the grounds that it would take away the rights sought to be conferred upon the tenants by this Bill and further that this privilege had been grossly abused in the past. The amendment was rejected by the House. Next day, the 10th January, the Assembly passed no less than 10 clauses after disposing of nearly 50 amendments. The Bill made no provision for the consolidation of holdings and three amendments were moved from the Opposition benches to provide for it. The Government who intended to introduce a separate bill to promote the consolidation of holdings both of zamindars and tenants accepted the spirit of one of these amendments and moved a comprehensive amendment of their own which the House adopted. Other two amendments were vigorously opposed on the ground that they sought to benefit the Zamindars and not the tenants and the consolidation of holdings was equally necessary for tenants as their holdings were subject to fragmentation in a far greater degree. The amendment accepted by the House provided for consolidation to a limited extent and did not obviate the necessity of a separate bill on the subject. Next day, the 11th January, Raja Bisheshwar Dayal Seth moved an amendment to Clause 59 sub-clause (2) providing that there should be a general provision that

tenants should be entitled to make improvements in land if they had obtained the permission of the landlord. The amendment was rejected. An interesting amendment to the same sub-clause was moved by Nawab Sir Mahomed Yusuf. It sought to make absolutely clear that unless the custom referred to in this clause was a recorded custom, or unless the consent of the zamindar was obtained, the occupancy tenant or ex-proprietary tenant would not be entitled to the benefits conferred by this Section. The amendment was rejected and Clause 51 was passed. The House took up Clause 59 relating to improvements to land by occupancy tenants. Mr Mubashir Hussain Kidwai moved an amendment to add that the improvement shall be one which the landholder himself was competent to make. The amendment was rejected. Clause 59(A) was then passed with a verbal amendment proposed by Mr Ishaq Khan. In Clause 60, dealing with restrictions, Raja Bisheshwar Dayal Seth moved unfit for the purpose for which it was given. The amendment was withdrawn. Clause 60 was passed with a verbal amendment proposed by Mr Mubashir Hussain Kidwai. Clause 61, making a tenant liable for full rent in cases of improvement, was passed without discussion. Clause 62 empowered the tenant to apply to the Assistant Collector if permission to make an improvement was refused by a landlord. Raja Bisheshwar Dayal Seth moved for its deletion. The amendment was rejected. Sub clauses (2) were deleted on the motion of Mr A.P. Jain and Clause 52 was passed. Raja Bisheshwar Dayal Seth moved an amendment to Clause 63 relating to the right of landholders to make improvement. The amendment was rejected. Next day, the 12th January, Mr A.P. Jain, Parliamentary Secretary, moved an amendment deleting sub-clauses (3) and (4) clause 63, which dealt with the rights of landholders to make improvements. These two sub-clauses enabled the Assistant Collector to grant or refuse permission to make improvements in a case where the tenant had refused to give the landlord his written consent. The amendment was opposed on legal grounds by Mr Ishaq Khan, Mr Jaffer Hussain, Nawab Sir Mohamed Yusuf, Mr Tahir Hussain, Raja Bisheshwar Dayal Seth, Mr Aziz Ahmed, and Mr Munfai Ali. The amendment was passed by 90 votes to 31. The House passed Mr A.P. Jain's amendment, substituting a new clause for Clause 63(a) and rejected the amendment for its deletion moved by Raja Bisheshwar Dayal Seth. Mr Mubashir Hussain Kidwai moved an amendment urging that permission be refused for any work costing more than five times the annual rental of the land. The amendment was withdrawn. Mr Rizwanullah moved an amendment to Clause 64 urging that the tenant should not be entitled to compensation for improvements made after the cause of action for a suit or notice had begun. The amendment was withdrawn. Raja Bisheshwar Dayal Seth moved another amendment against the tenant being entitled to compensation for improvements made even within three months prior to service of summons or notice. He said he wanted to prevent fraud. The House accepted Mr Ishaq Khan's amendment that a tenant should not be entitled to compensation for improvements made after the date of institution of a suit or making of application for issue of notice. Raja Bisheshwar Dayal Seth withdrew his amendment. Clause 64 was then adopted. Mr A.P. Jain moved two amendments to Clause 65, dealing with compensation for buildings when erected without the landholder's consent, to the effect that the tenant be entitled to sell such buildings before the date of delivery of possession or before some later date with the permission of a court. Raja Bisheshwar Dayal Seth sought to add another provision that the tenant from whom any arrear of rent was due to the landholders should not be entitled to remove the materials until he had discharged the arrear due. When the Government made no reply, the Raja complained that the Government had made up their mind not to discuss the various suggestions made by the opposition benches. The amendment was rejected and Mr Jain's amendment was adopted. Next day, the 13th January, the House accepted an amendment moved by Mr A.P. Jain, Parliamentary Secretary, to Clause 69. The amendment laid down conditions for the transfer of right of improvements in the land made by a tenant, in case it was sold for arrears for rent. Clause

69(A), with certain verbal changes to bring it into line with previous Clauses which had been amended, was then passed. Mr Fazlur Rahman Khan and the Nawab of Chhatari opposed the amendment. The latter urged that there must be some limit to the fickle-mindedness of the Government. He considered that the only principle involved in the proposed change was an attempt to harm both Zamindars and tenants. He asserted that if the amendment was passed, it would cause breaches of the peace between the tenants themselves in the rural areas. Instead of being a blessing the Bill had become a curse. The amendment was adopted. Raja Bisheshwar Dayal Seth next moved an amendment, deleting Sub-Clause 71(b) the effect of which was to take away the tenant's rights in scattered trees on his holding, which had been in his possession for the last ten years. The amendment was rejected. Mr A.P. Jain moved a number of amendments to Section 72, the object of which was to provide facilities to tenants for the surrender of their holdings. The Clause, as amended, was passed. An amendment by Mr Ishaq Khan to section 73 sought to raise the period from fifteen days to one month during which a holding could be surrendered after a decree for the enhancement of rent had been passed. The amendment was accepted by Mr Jain. Four more clauses were passed before the House adjourned till Monday next, the 16th January, when fifteen clauses (78 to 93) were passed. Most of them related to the determination and modification of rent and were passed with little or no variation. That the order of remission or suspension of rent passed by the Government for natural calamities should be open to be questioned in civil or revenue court was the object of an amendment moved in the afternoon by an Independent Party member. The amendment was opposed not only by the Government, but also by the Muslim League party. It was pointed out by the Revenue Minister that it did not prelude anybody from seeking redress in the court if the Government acted against the provisions of the Bill. During the course of discussions, it was announced by Mr A.P. Jain, Parliamentary Secretary that the Government did not propose to do away with ejectment clauses, but they would make alternative proposals regarding sale by auction and the exact proposals will be communicated to the House. Next day, the 17th January, the demand of the Muslim League party for the application of personal law under the provisions of the Bill was partially conceded by the Government, when they moved an amendment to clause 10, that on the death of the *Sir*-holder the *Sir* right shall not devolve except in accordance with the personal law to which the deceased was subject. A Muslim Leaguer with a view to clarifying the position sought to add an explanation to the clause that the law in the case of the Muslims shall mean the Shariat Law of inheritance. This amendment, however, was not pressed in view of the able exposition by a lawyer member, Chaudhri Haider Husain, that the personal law could not but mean Hindu law in the case of the Hindus and Muhammadan law in the case of Muslims. The concession made by the Government to the Muslim sentiment was highly appreciated by the Muslim League party, but caused some flutter among the taluqdars. Their spokesman, Raja Bisheshwar Dayal Seth lost no time in moving another amendment that the personal law made applicable to *Sir* holders should not apply in cases governed by Act 1 of 1869. In other words, the Raja wanted that the *Sir* of the taluqdars should be governed by the taluqdari law of succession. The amendment did not find favour with the House. The consideration of clauses ten and twelve which had been postponed at the request of the Government was resumed today, and they were passed. The Government stoutly resisted two opposition amendments to section 94, that the court fee in suits relating to variation of rent should not exceed Rs 10 and Rs 15 respectively. Their point of view was that such a limit would not help the tenants at all in their existing circumstances, but would, on the contrary encourage the zamindars to institute suits for enhancement of rent in the whole village. The amendments were rejected by the House. Next day, 18th January, a most controversial amendment was debated relating to Clause 101 on the duration of rent rates. A provision to the Clause provides that the Provincial Government may

order revision of rent in case of a rise or fall in prices. Further, it provides that the Government may postpone revision on ground of administrative convenience. The amendment was rejected by 27 to 83 votes. Several other amendments aiming to reduce the period after which revision might take place were rejected and Clause 101 was passed. Six amendments relating to Clause 120 (1) were then taken up. The Government accepted two amendments moved by the Opposition. One related to the approval of the Legislature before appointing an officer to revise rent and revenue in emergencies and the other to the deletion of Clause 102 (1) (D) giving power to an officer to commute produce rents into money rents. Clause 120 (1) was passed and the Assembly adjourned till the 19th January, when Mr Tahir Hossain (Muslim League) moved an amendment providing that the appeal against the order of an officer, appointed under Section 102, fixing, abetting, enhancing or commuting rent should lie with the District Judge and not with the Commissioner. The amendment was rejected. The House also rejected Raja Bisheshwar Dayal Seth's amendment seeking to provide power to commute to the Board of Revenue in connection with the revision of rent and revenue in cases of emergency. Mr Ishaq Khan moved for the deletion of the proviso that no order under this Section should be questioned in any civil or revenue court, with a view to checking the misuse of the powers conferred on the Government. The amendment was rejected. The House passes Clause 102 and the next two clauses without much discussion. Clause 105, which was next taken up, evoked considerable discussion. Mr A.P. Jain moved six amendments, all of which were of minor importance, except the one to sub-clause 105 (2) (d) that the valuation of holdings of hereditary tenants at the proposed rates does not exceed one-fifth of the value of the produce. A member of the Independent Party moved an amendment to sub-clause (d) that nine-twentieth be substituted for one one-fifth. He also moved the deletion of sub-clause (e). All official amendments were accepted and the others were rejected. Raja Bisheshwar Dayal Seth moved an amendment to the effect that the rent agreed to by tenants who were admitted to holdings in or between 1304 and 1313 faslis should not form the basis of rent rates. By another amendment, the Raja wanted to omit the ratio of one-fifth (of rent to produce) for purpose of rent fixation. The Nawab of Chhatari moved an amendment to the same sub-clause for excluding the period between 1304 and 1308 faslis. Nawab Sir M Yusuf moved another amendment to the same sub-clause that rent should be fixed at not less than one-fifth and not more than one-third of the produce. Mr A.P. Jain opposed all the amendments, which were rejected. The Assembly then adjourned till Monday next, the 23rd January, when eight more clauses were passed. Owing to strong and unanimous opposition on the part of members not belonging to the Congress Party, Government was obliged to withdraw the amendment to clause 105, which in some way countenanced the existing iniquitous arrangement, whereby some of the tenants belonging to higher castes enjoy a privileged position in the matter of payment of rent. The Government amendment which sought gradually to eliminate such caste privileges required the rent rate officer to record the extent to which, in any village, any class of person held land at a favorable rate or rent, and the extent to which, in their application to suits for enhancement of rent of the members on this account. Nawab Sir Mohammad Yusuf, in opposing the amendment said, 'It is staggering that a Democratic Government should make bold to come forward with such a preposterous proposal.' The members of the scheduled castes appealed to the Government to withdraw the amendment as it sought to perpetuate in statute the existing distinction between them and the higher castes. The Nawab of Chhatari pointedly drew the Government's attention to the fact that such a provision contained in the original Bill had been omitted by the select committee. The zamindar members strongly urged, in connection with section 115, that rent should be liable to enhancement when the productive powers of land were increased by fluvial action or by any other cause. They stressed that by refusing to accept their plea, the Government ignored their just

claim. The amendment moved with this object was opposed by Government and rejected by the House. Next day, 24th January, the Assembly passed ten clauses and postponed the consideration of one at the request of the Revenue Minister. One of the clauses renders void and illegal the demands made by zamindars from tenants. It views that all fees, charges or impositions upon tenants under the denomination of *abwab*, *zaid*, *matalba*, *hari*, *begar*, or other like appellations in addition to rent or *sayar*, if any payable, should be illegal and unenforceable in a court of law. The zamindar's viewpoint found expression in a speech made by Raja Bisheshwar Dayal Seth, who said that the clause as drafted amounted to an expropriation of the zamindars rights and nothing else. He said that the zamindars were entitled to get certain dues from their tenants and Government was not at all justified in abolishing the rights hitherto enjoyed by the zamindars. He moved an amendment making an exception in the case of dues covered by a contract or custom. The Nawab of Chhatari moved another amendment that all unrecorded demands should be rendered void. The House rejected both the amendments and carried the amendment moved by Mr A.P. Jain making *nazrana* also illegal. Clause 129 was under consideration when the House adjourned till the 6th February when the Bill did not make much headway. Only two clauses were passed and the consideration of eight clauses in chapter VII was postponed at the request of the Government in order to enable them to redraft the clauses. Next day, the 7th February, twelve clauses were passed. One of them prohibits arrest or detention of a tenant for arrears of rent. An amendment for the deletion of the clause moved by a member of the Independent party was opposed both by the Government as well as the Opposition parties and it was in the end withdrawn. The landlord members expressed the hope that the Government would also prohibit the arrest and detention of zamindars for arrears of land revenue. That distraint should not be one of the methods for the recovery of arrears of rent was the object of a Government amendment, which the landlord members strongly opposed. Their main criticism was that in the select committee the Government had agreed to this provision but now for some mysterious reason they wanted to take a somersault and deprive the zamindars of this easy method of realizing their arrears of rent from the tenants. Nawab Yusuf said that the Congress Government seemed to change with the change of the wind and had no settled principles on anything. The Nawab of Chhatari declared that it would be a mistake to remove the provision relating to distraint altogether, and by doing so the Government would be giving no protection to the tenant. The Assembly today passed clause 150. Next day, the 8th February, the House accepted an important amendment moved by Mr A.P. Jain to Clause 151. The amendment empowers the Government to recover arrears of rent from tenants, in the case of a general refusal, as arrears of land revenue. Another important amendment moved by Mr Krishnananda Khare vests certain power in the Collector in case of a dispute between cotenants which is likely to cause a breach of the peace or where the zamindars have realised illegal demands. The Collector, in such cases, will take the areas under his management and will pay the profit to the persons entitled to it after deducting the cost. Mr A.P. Jain, Parliamentary Secretary, moved another amendment to the above amendment. At the request of the Opposition consideration of both the amendments was postponed. The Minister for Revenue moved the deletion of Chapter Eight from the Tenancy Bill, which will do away with 29 clauses, 225 amendments and contentious provisions. A number of Congressmen participated in the debate. The Opposition benches vehemently opposed the motion and urged that the chapter contained a wholesome provision to deal with recalcitrant and habitual defaulters among the tenants. Nawab Mohammad Yusuf complained of the Government's vacillation, as they now wanted deletion of what they had agreed to in the Select Committee. The motion was adopted. Thereafter the House passed Clauses 178 and 179 before adjourning till the next day, the 9th February, when after passing certain re-drafted clauses relating to deposit of rent in the tahsildar's court and its disposal,

barring of suits against anything done regarding the deposit, and the deposit of rent in court during the tendency of a suit, the consideration of which had been previously postponed. The Assembly devoted the rest of the day to the discussion of a single contentious clause, which the Government have now brought forward with a view to enable the collector of a district to take charge of the village, mahal or portion thereof, and retain it under his own management, if after holding a suitable enquiry he was satisfied that any hardship was caused to the tenants due to a dispute between co-shares regarding their rights, or the realisation of illegal charges, habitual refusal of grant of receipts for the rent or sayar, or acts of opposing by the landlord, under-proprietor, permanent lessee, or thekadar. The landlord members vigorously opposed this clause, which was characterised as the most obnoxious and the most poisonous by Raja Bisheshwar Dayal. That it was a repressive measure brought by the back door to be used against their political opponents, who had courage to oppose the Congress candidates during elections, was the view expressed by Mr Zahiruddin Faruqi. A large number of amendments moved by the Opposition members, most of which were opposed by the Government, were rejected by the House. Three amendments were, however, accepted. Their effect was to enable the collector to manage the property acquired by him under this clause for a period not exceeding two years, as the provincial Government might direct, and return the surplus to the proper person after deducting the amount of land revenue due. Further the hardship caused to persons other than the tenants in the village would not convince the Government of the Justice of their claims for the realisation of arrears of rent even when the tenant was ejected. The House passed clause 181 according to which arrears of rent are deemed to be satisfied when the tenant is ejected from the whole or any portion of his holdings. The Government, however, partially accepted an amendment moved by a Muslim Leaguer in respect of clause 185 about ejectment of a tenant for arrears of rent and this gave some satisfaction to them. The time limit for making applications to the tahsildar was extended by one month and the zamindars could be allowed to apply for ejectment for arrears not exceeding one year's rent, although the arrears might relate to the year preceding the previous agricultural year. The Government thought that it was just and reasonable that the tenant should not be deprived of more than half of his holding for arrears not exceeding one year's rent and opposed the amendment moved against that provision. The House then adjourned till Monday, the 13th February, when it devoted considerable time considering amendments relating to the procedure regarding ejectment for arrears of rent in Clause 185. At the end of the day it had passed only clauses 185 and 185 (A). Several amendments of the Opposition wanted that no court fee be paid on such applications and also pleaded for increasing the time-limit for such applications. They were all rejected as the Government opposed all of them. The Government accepted the principle of the Opposition's amendment that an application could be amended after it had been filed. Mr A.P. Jain moved an amendment to provide for this, which was passed. While discussion of the amendment to Clause 185 (B) was proceeding, the House rose for the day and adjourned till the next day, the 14th February, when Clauses 185 (B) to 185 (G) were passed by the House, which also accepted modification of sub-clause 185 (H) regarding the procedure in disputes concerning rent. Consideration of Clause 185 (J) was postponed for redrafting it. Next day, the 15th February, no less than fifteen amendments were moved by the Opposition to Clause 185-K after it was passed. This was a new clause moved yesterday by Mr A.P. Jain, Parliamentary Secretary. It empowers the tahsildar to lease the land of an ejected tenant, for a period not exceeding six years, to a person depositing the arrears due. Two amendments were carried by the House and the rest were rejected after discussion. In accordance with these amendments. The tahsildar may exercise his discretion on an application being made by the ejected tenant and not otherwise; and, secondly, he may lease the land simultaneously with the ejectment of the tenant without waiting for proceedings

between the 31st day of May and the 15th day of June of the agricultural year in which the tenant is ejected. Raja Bisheshwar Dayal Seth wanted that the tahsildar should lease land only with the written consent of the landlord. Another member urged that a portion of the holding not exceeding one half should be leased. A third amendment wanted that the land should be leased to agricultural labours, tenants with economic holdings, or other tenants residing in the village. Another amendment urged that compensation should be paid to an ejected tenant who had effected certain improvements. The purpose of this amendment was accepted by the Revenue Minister, and he himself moved an amendment to the effect that the tahsildar may lease the land on an application from the tenant. This amendment was accepted and the clause, as amended, was passed. Both on this day and on the next day, the 16th February, the Bill made very little progress. While only one clause was passed yesterday, not more than two clauses were passed today. The clauses which were passed today made some further concessions to tenants in the matter of ejectment proceedings. The tenant is given ample time to pay the decretal amount, and it is further provided that if within one month after his ejectment the tenant deposits the amount, the ejectment order shall be cancelled. In the case of ejectment, it is stipulated that the tenant would be ejected only from such portion of the holding the rent of which does not exceed one-sixth of the decretal amount. A number of amendments moved to whittle down the concessions granted to ejected tenants were rejected after discussion. The House then adjourned till Monday, the 20th February, when twelve more clauses in the chapter on ejectment were passed and section 200 was being discussed. Most of the amendments, moved to safeguard the rights of landholders, were opposed by the Government and rejected by the House. Twice in the course of the day the discussion on amendments had to be stopped for want of quorum. Next day, the 21st February, consideration of clauses 203, 204 and 205 was postponed at the request of the Government, while the other clauses from 200 to 208, dealing with ejectment of persons occupying without title, mode of execution and remedies for wrongful rejectment were passed with minor verbal amendments. The only amendment of importance was moved by Mr A.P. Jain, substituting a new clause for Clause 202 to the effect that delivery of possession in execution of a decree or order for ejectment of a civil or revenue court shall not be made before the first day of April or after the thirtieth day of June in any year in which it was passed. Sir Mohammad Yusuf, moving another amendment to the clause, remarked that it was a most systematic and calculated method of doing away with ejectment altogether. With the passing of Clause 209, the Assembly today finished the chapter on ejectment which proved to be a contentious chapter in the Bill. Thereafter the House took up Chapter 10 dealing with grants of land held rent-free or at a favourable rate of rent. Raja Bisheshwar Dayal Seth moved an amendment to Clause 210 urging that in a registered instrument, the conditions of the grant and its duration should be set forth. The amendment was rejected by 61 votes to 20 and an amendment by Mr A.P. Jain, that the grant of land for the purpose of planting groves should not be treated as rent free was passed. Clauses 213 to 218 were passed with slight modifications. Clause 216, however, was postponed for redrafting to incorporate a suggestion from the Opposition that the grant of land for a religious or social service should be deemed exempt so far as proprietary rights accrued in it. The House adjourned till the next day, the 22nd February, when it accepted clause 216 as re-drafted. Mr Jafar Hussain moved an amendment to it, but Mr Jain contended that his amendment weakens if Mr Jafar Hussain pressed his amendment. Mr Jafar Hussain complained that the Government were unnecessarily charging the Opposition with adopting dilatory tactics, but agreed to withdraw his amendment. Next day, the 23rd February, the Assembly spent the whole day discussing amendments on Clause 228 and its sub-clauses. Earlier, the House passed Clause 227, laying down the definition of grove-holders. Clause 228 describes the rights and liabilities of grove-holders. Two divisions were challenged. Mr Zahirul Hassan Lari, by an amendment, sought

that grove-holders should not have the right of transfer of groves. The amendment was rejected by 29 votes to 85. An amendment moved by Mr Muhammad Raza Khan further wanted that the right of grove-holders shall not be auctioned in satisfaction of a civil or revenue courts decree. The amendment was rejected by 30 votes to 84 and further discussion on the Bill terminated at this stage to be resumed later.

20th to 24th April: In the Assembly today the Tenancy Laws Amendment Bill and the Police Amendment Bill were introduced. The third reading of the Tenancy Bill was next taken up. Mr Rafi Ahmed Kidwai, Minister for Revenue, referring to the changes made in the Bill, said that where arrears remained, the Zamindar could get a part of the holding auctioned. Thus there would be no ejectment. The Bill gave the Kashtkar a right to plant all over his holding. By one of the amendments a sub-tenant in Oudh could not be ejected for five years. Nawab Sir Moammad Yusuf hoped that the Government would come to some honourable settlement which would usher in a happy era. According to him, the Bill aimed at bringing about dissensions between the tenants and the zamindars. The basis of rent was, he said, so vague that it lent itself to mischievous possibilities and would pave the way for expropriation of zamindars. It would not benefit the Government either. He asked the Government if they did not want to let the zamindar keep his body and soul together and what their object was in making these "undesirable and pernicious provisions". The Muslim League Party spokesman said that the League had decided to support the passage of the Bill despite its limitations and imperfections, because it gave tenants fixity of tenure, fair rent and favourable conditions. He charged Congressmen with not fulfilling their pledge to the electorate. Discussion had not concluded when the House adjourned to meet on the next day, the 21st April. The third reading of the Bill was continued. Some non-Congressites, while generally admitting that the Bill was a definite improvement in the direction of bettering the lot of the tenancy, characterised it as a 'Black Bill' inasmuch as it endangered the rights of zamindars. This brought forth a spirited reply from Congressmen; Mr Saiduddin Ahmed remarked that the Bill was the Magna Carta of the tenants. The Opposition were blamed by Ministerialists for adopting 'dilatory tactics'. Next day, the 22nd April, the third reading of the Tenancy Bill was continued. Raja Bisheshwar Dayal Seth said that the Bill should not be operative in Oudh, since it was mostly based on the Agra law. The Talukdars, he pointed out, held sanads from an authority higher than the UP Legislature and this legislature had therefore, no right to do anything in contravention of the terms of the sanads. The Talukdars were the declared proprietors under the terms of the sanads and this legislature could not confer hereditary rights against the consent of the Talukdars. Mr A.P. Jain, Parliamentary Secretary, said that zamindars never took any compassion on tenants and got them ejected on very minor pretexts. This Government, which claimed to be civilised, could not tolerate any hardship on anybody. There should only be two parties in that province, namely the Government and cultivator. Mr Mubashir Hussain Kidwai (Muslim League) welcomed the Bill and said that the fact that the Muslim League amendments were accepted by the Government showed that the League was trying its best to improve the Bill. He had not finished his speech when the House adjourned till the 24th April when the Bill was passed by the House without a division amidst cheers from the Congress benches. During the consideration stage nearly 3,000 amendments were tabled, of which 850 were actually moved. Three hundred and seventy amendments of these were adopted.

21st August: The Council took up the Tenancy Laws (Amendment) Bill in which clause 4 deleted by the Council was restored by the Assembly. This clause provides for the transfer of pending declaratory suits relating to Khudkasht and Sir from civil to revenue courts.

The discussion of the UP Tenancy Bill commenced on the 24th August and continued till the 16th September when it was passed. Speaking on the third reading motion, Dr M.U. Jung,

Parliamentary Secretary, congratulated the Minister of Revenue on his tact and ability in piloting the Bill and appreciated the magnanimity which the zamindar members had shown to tenants by helping the Government in passing the legislation. It was to their credit that they had faced the grim realities of the situation and had moved with the times. Refuting the suggestion that it was a revolutionary measure, he stressed that the Bill was a sound piece of legislation which happily balanced the interests of zamindars and tenants.

Lala Mohan Lal Sah, giving his half-hearted support to the Bill, criticised that instead of adopting a bold land policy, the Government had followed the Agra Tenancy Act which only perpetuated the zamindari system. He agreed that in order to make the tenants cheerful it was necessary that they must have proprietary interest in land. The Government should purchase the interests in land and settle them on tenants. He thought that the Government had shown no charity in the matter of reduction in revenue while profits of the middlemen (landlord) had somewhat been reduced.

Mr Chandra Bhal (Congress) said that the passage of the Bill in the Upper House was a triumph of reason. They could not be sufficiently thankful to the Opposition for the reasonable spirit shown by them. The Opposition members ignored their class interests in order to further the interests of the province. He believed that the only solution of the agrarian problem was the abolition of the Zamindari system with compensation to Zamindars. The *Sir* area was 5,600,000 acres of which 2,000,000 acres was added after the 1926 legislation and this Bill sought to reduce the *Sir* area by 700,000 acres. It was therefore wrong to assert that the Bill was vindictive, rapacious, or an expropriatory piece of legislation. The Bill, he concluded, would not create a new heaven and a new earth for tenants, but the Government had tried to do whatever it could in the circumstances in which it found itself.

Begam Aizaz Rasul said that it was in their best interests that the zamindars had reached an understanding with the Government, otherwise whatever the amendments they could make by their strength of votes would have been upset in a joint session of both the Houses. She felt that the part she took in carrying on the negotiations with the Government was quite justified under the circumstances. The *Sir* provisions in the Bill were particularly unjust to zamindars though the Bill had been improved in some other respects.

Mr Ram Sahai deplored that the Bill did little to improve the condition of scheduled castes, who are mostly landless labourers, and permanently deprived them of any chance of acquiring land.

Mr Badri Prasad Kacher (Congress) said that the Revenue Minister's achievement in successfully piloting the Bill by winning over the Opposition was nothing short of a miracle.

Bai Bahadur Brijendra Swarup said that it was a matter of gratification that his hopes had been fulfilled and that the Bill which had raised a storm of agitation had smooth passage after its return from the select committee. This would not have been possible without the help and full constructive attitude of a number of zamindars who deserved to be congratulated on their wider outlook.

Shaikh Masood-uz-Zam. opined that on the whole the Bill was not an improvement on the existing law. There were several provisions which tended to cause a breach of the peace in the countryside. The ejectment clauses were helpful neither to the landlord nor to the tenant.

Begum Wazir Hosain said that the Tenancy Bill was a beneficent measure intended to promote the welfare of the down-trodden tenancy.

Chaudhri Akhtar Husain said that the passage of the Bill was a great triumph of the Prime Minister who literally broke through the Opposition which was far stronger than the Government party in the House. Proceeding, he said that the Bill was unwanted. It would not lead to agricultural prosperity and the defects outnumbered the advantages. He warned the Government that there

might be a crop of cases questioning the validity of the Bill and the Government might have to pay heavy damages for breach of contract. Despite its avowed love for civil liberties the Government had provided in the Bill for criminal penalties to zamindars for civil wrongs. This provision was open to serious objections. It was wrong to have omitted distraint provisions altogether. The treatment accorded to landless labourers by the Government was step-motherly.

Haji Nisarulla said that the Government had succeeded in playing off one group and that was why the consideration of 301 clauses took less than a fortnight. The negotiations committee had found the Revenue Minister too stiff and the negotiations came to a sad end. He referred to the growing influence of Kisan sabhaites who told the tenants that they need not pay rents and warned the Government that the passage of the Bill would not remedy trouble in the country. The Opposition was reduced to such a position that it had to submit to the Government. The Bill was very short of the expectations of the landlords and it was not worthy of acceptance.

Mr Rafi Ahmed Kidwai, winding up, said that it was a matter of satisfaction that a long-standing controversy was going to end. He hoped that the enactment would restore tranquility in the countryside. The controversy over the Bill, he added, was causing a great deal of excitement in villages.

The Bill was then passed, one Opposition member saying 'no' to the third reading motion.

4th October: The labours of the Government, spread over a period of two years, bore fruit today when one of the most important though contentious pieces of legislation initiated by them, namely, the Tenancy Bill, was adopted by the Assembly, incorporating the amendments made by the Council.

During the last two days, the House disposed of with lightning rapidity about five hundred amendments made by the Upper House. Members of the Opposition including Raja Bisheshwar Dayal, the Nawab of Chhatari, and Nawab Sir Mohammad Yusuf criticised the measure while the official spokesmen stressed how the Bill kept the balance even between the zamindars and the tenant.

4. The Sind Ministry

'Sind Politics', Editorial, *Hindu*, 13 January 1939

The political situation in Sind has undergone yet another kaleidoscopic change. At the time when the Muslim League Conference was held in Karachi just three months ago it looked as if the League had succeeded in imposing its will on the Ministry and that Allah Bakhsh and Pir Ilahi Bakhsh were content to remain nominal heads of the Government, while the League Party in the Assembly, taking its orders from the central organisation, would be the effective power. But it later turned out that Jinnah had pitched his expectations too high. Owing to the fluctuating membership of the League Party and the discriminating support that the small but compact Congress Party of ten members was prepared to give the Ministry on the one condition that the reassessment proposals under the Sukkur Barrage should be held in abeyance for a year, the Allah Bakhsh government was able to avoid submission to the Muslim League. From the Prime Minister's reply to the censure motion, it will be seen that he might have reconciled himself to such submission if the League had been able to persuade at least 33 Muslim members of the Assembly—a bare majority—to enroll themselves under its banner. But only 26 Muslim members did actually join the Muslim League, and a good proportion of these, including Ghulam Hussain Hidayatullah, leader of the Opposition till recently, and his deputy, have again deserted the League fold. This seems to have been due partly to the lack of cohesion in the rather heterogeneous mess that Jinnah managed to assemble under the League banner for a short space, partly to the fissiparous effect of the personal stresses

and antagonisms which are the dominating factors in Sind politics and partly to the high-handed methods which the League seems to have adopted in its attempt to gain complete control of at least one provincial ministry. Without going into the truth of the serious charges that Allah Bakhsh leveled against the League,¹ it seems fairly clear that the League's hopes of dominating Sind politics have definitely crashed.²

But what of the proposals for assessment of the Barrage area over which the whole trouble began and which formed the chief item in the arraignment of the Ministry over the no-confidence motion? The Ministry, which looked like agreeing at first to the Congress proposal to postpone consideration of the question for a year, apparently feels now that, in view of the fact that a good portion of the opposition has come over to its side, it can safely refuse to give any such undertaking. At the same time, Allah Bakhsh has thoughtfully provided a way of retreat, should later developments make that advisable, by declaring that it is 'far from his intention not to revise the proposals (for assessment) or to respect the wishes of the parties, including the Congress'.³ He argued that it was unfair to charge him with not having consulted his own party before passing executive orders on the assessment, since it would have been unconstitutional for the Ministry to discuss taxation proposals even with its own party. But he seems to forget that it is no less unconstitutional for the Ministry to stick to office after the party by virtue of which it came to power had repudiated the Ministry on a major question of policy. Be that as it may, the one party that has not only maintained but enhanced its reputation in this muddle is the Congress Party which has, consistently enough, decided to resume freedom of action now that the Ministry is willing to abide by the condition regarding the assessment. Jinnah accused it of trying to make trouble between various sections of Muslims in Sind. But the untenableness of this charge has been amply exposed by the Congress decision to keep aloof with regard to the no-confidence motion. Allah Bakhsh has handsomely acknowledged that the Congress has acted fairly and justly, and whatever may happen to his Ministry, the Congress in Sind will continue to pursue the straightforward path.

¹ On 12 January 1939, Allah Bakhsh reported of a conspiracy to assassinate him and his ministerial colleagues.

² Allah Bakhsh made clear that he would not 'succumb to the vicious influence of the League', and expressed satisfaction at the League's decline in Sind. He made clear that the members of the League had formed the organisation 'with the distinct object of capturing office'.

³ For the full text of the statement, see *Proceedings of the Sind Legislative Assembly: Official Report, 1939*, Vol. VI, No. 7, Thursday, the 12th January 1939, pp. 83-86.

5. Unionist Party and National Unity

Article by Gulshan Rai,* *Tribune*, 17 January 1939

The Unionist Party¹ in the Punjab calls itself "National Unionist Party." One of its main objects should be to promote and develop national unity and solidarity in the province. One of its chief concerns should be to end party factions and to reconcile differences between the classes and the masses. It should be the duty of this Party to bring about communal harmony in the province. This party has now been in power for more than 21 months. It would be rather interesting enquiry to find out how far it has achieved those objects. When the Unionist Party was re-organised in the beginning of 1936, by the late Sir Fazl-i-Husain,² it was given out that this party would be entirely non-communal in its outlook, and national in its programme. Many of us were given to understand that the programme of the Unionist Party would not differ materially from the constructive programme of the Indian National Congress. It was actually known that in 1936 the leaders of the

re-organised Unionist Party in the Punjab were actively negotiating for an alliance with the Congress Party in the Province. I am persuaded to believe that if the Congress High Command had decided to accept office in its session of December 1936, the Unionist Party in the Punjab would have formed a coalition ministry in combination with the Congress Party. But the Congress decided not to accept office at the time. The Unionist Party then made alliances with the Hindu Sabha Party³ and the Chief Khalsa Diwan. It is still given out that the programme of the Unionist Party would be quite national and very much similar to that of the Congress. The Party started well. Soon after assuming office the Premier, as leader of the Unionist Party, convened a Unity Conference. The object of this Unity Conference was to bring about an understanding between Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs, in connection with the differences that exist in religious matters, communal representation, legislative bodies, local bodies, and services, and in social questions. This Unity Conference held some sittings in 1937, but after the close of that year no more sittings of this Conference have taken place. One of the assurances that the Premier gave at the very beginning of his administration was that in matters where there was a religious conflict, he would, in the absence of a mutually agreed formula, maintain the status quo ante. Since then several cases have arisen in connection with cow-slaughter. The most prominent example was that of Choa Saidan Shah, near Ketas Raj, a Hindu place of pilgrimage. Deputations were led before the Premier in this connection. Prominent members of the Hindu community presented the case before him. He gave them clear assurance that in the absence of agreement, he would maintain the status quo, and order the removal of the unauthorized slaughter-house that has been opened at Choa by an outsider. Several high placed officials have tried to bring about a compromise, but without any success. The premier has not so far moved even his little finger to remove the slaughter-house. Another cow-slaughter case took place in the Hindu quarter in Hissar last year. The local authorities have recommended that cow slaughter be permitted only in Muhalla Qasaban, and nowhere else in the town of Hissar. But here again the Government of Sir Sikander Hyat⁴ has not moved in the matter.

In the matter of communal representation in the legislative and local bodies, the Premier is known to hold views in favour of joint electorates with reservation of seats. Some time back figures were collected to find out how far it would be possible to maintain the existing representation of the different communities on the basis of joint electorates. But for the last one year no meetings of the Unity Conference have been held to examine these figures. In the matter of public services the Premier is known to be in favour of 50 per cent for the Muslims, 30 per cent for the Hindus, and 20 per cent for the Sikhs and others. The right course for the Premier should have been to decide once and for all in favour of these proportions, if he was so inclined, and then to entrust the entire matter of the selection of candidates within those proportions to the Public Services Commission. Presently the Commission's powers are extremely restricted. They are required to select candidates only for those appointments which carry a salary of more than 150 rupees per month, or those appointments which were formerly filled by the Provincial Government. All other appointments are at the present moment filled by the Heads of Departments, working of course under the direction, supervision, and control of the ministers.

Now it is highly objectionable for the ministers to have anything to do with the recruitment of services. It is openly stated even now that most of the appointments in the Punjab Government services are at the present moment filled on communal or political considerations. The Premier has so far done nothing to reassure the public in this matter.

The next most important point to be considered is how far an effort has been made to reconcile the conflicting interest of the masses with the classes. Let it be admitted for the sake of argument that so far certain urban classes in the province had all the good things to themselves and that they

had been exploiting the masses. Let it also be agreed that the debt-ridden agriculturists required a great amount of relief. But all this did not mean that in doing justice to the aggrieved, the pendulum should now swing to the other side, and the upper dog should now become the under dog. A Government which calls itself national should not think of penalizing any class because in the past it has not been behaving properly. The Unionist Government was in quite fairness, entitled to full support at the hands of all reasonable people, if its object was to stop exploitation of the masses by the classes. But when in addition to stopping further exploitation, it proceeded to make the alleged exploiters, disgorge what they had obtained in the past, it went too far. When the Government proceeded to impose disabilities on the followers of certain occupations in order to benefit the agricultural classes, they followed a policy which cannot in any way be called national, but it can very rightly be called discriminative. When the Government in the case of followers of certain occupations made distinctions based on birth, and gave statutory advantages to certain castes and tribes notified under the Punjab Alienation of Lands Act,¹ which were not available to castes and tribes not notified under this Act, they put themselves entirely in the wrong. The recent agrarian legislation undertaken by the Unionist Government amply shows that the main object of these measures was to give relief to the statutory agriculturists at the expense of all other classes. Take for example the Bill in connection with Benami transactions. I agree that Benami transactions are not honest. They are certainly evasions of the law. But if Benami transactions are immoral, they should be so in all cases. Why should they be null and void in case the Benami transactions affect the statutory agriculturists, and be quite valid when they affect others? Does this kind of legislation promote harmony and unity, or does it set one class against another? Similarly take the redemption of Mortgages Act. I quite agree that agricultural lands should be taken away from those mortgages who have recovered twice the amount of the principal. But why should this principle apply to transactions made before the 8 June 1901 and not to transactions made after this date? Here there is discrimination pure and simple. I admit that the principles of the Bills introduced by the Unionist Government were sound, but so much class poison has been introduced in them, that they have ceased to be beneficial. In trying to pamper the statutory agriculturist, the Unionist Party has lost the confidence of other classes, who are about 50 per cent of the total population. Such action cannot promote and develop national unity and solidarity. Such a policy is likely to cut up the population into mutually warring camps. This policy will produce not peace and harmony but civil war. Sir Sikander Hyat is a soldier. He wants the Punjab² to be a base of military defence for the whole of India. Can he afford to have different sections of the Punjab population flying at the throats of one another in this military base? Democratic government means government by persuasion. The right policy for Sir Sikander Hyat Khan is to carry through his measures not by the force of majority in the Assembly, which he happens to possess for the moment, but by taking the minorities, whether political, communal, or economic, into confidence. It is better to move slow than to rouse bitter opposition, and thereby lose useful and well-meaning allies.

* Article by Gulshan Rai, *Tribune*, 17 January 1939. a journalist politician, Gulshan Rai was a leading figure in the Hindu revitalization movements. He was connected with the Punjab Hindu Sabha and with the Arya Samaj Leagues. He was a vocal critic of the Fazl-i-Husain Ministry and generally opposed to any concessions offered to the Muslims of Punjab.

¹ The Unionist Party in Punjab was founded in 1923 by Fazl-i-Husain and Chhotu Ram (1882-1945). Some of its administration objects were: (1) to attain dominion status within the British Commonwealth of Nations by constitutional means; (2) to secure a fair distribution of the burden of provincial taxes between agricultural and other classes; (3) to check the exploitation of economically dominant classes; and (4) to preserve intact the Punjab Land Alienation Act as a measure of protection to backward classes.

² Fazl-i-Husain (1877-1936): educated at Government College, Lahore, and Christ College, Cambridge, began practice in Sialkot, 1901-08 and later in Punjab High Court, Lahore, 1905-20; appointed minister of education in 1921.

returned unopposed to Punjab Legislative Council, 1923; re-appointed Revenue Member in 1926; Education Minister in Punjab, May–July 1936, founder and chief architect of the Punjab National Unionist Party from 1923 until his death on 9 July 1936.

¹ The Punjab Provincial Sabha was founded in Lahore. Its first conference was held in Lahore in October 1909 under the Presidentship of Protul Chandra Chatterjee, a retired judge of the Punjab High Court.

² In 1907 the Khalsa Diwan Society was organised in Vancouver, with branches all over North America. The Society also established itself in Punjab in due course and emerged as a significant force in provincial politics. In 1902, the Amritsar and Lahore Associations combined under the title 'Chief Khalsa Diwar', with Sardar Sunder Singh Majithia (1872–1941) as its Secretary.

³ Sikander Hyat Khan (1892–1942) belonged to a leading landowning family of Western Punjab. He was educated at the University College, London, took part in the military operations during World War I, and was elected to the Legislative Council in 1921. He was Revenue Member in the Punjab government from 1930 to 1935 and again from 1936 to 1937. He was Chief Minister of Punjab from 1937 until his death on 26 December 1942.

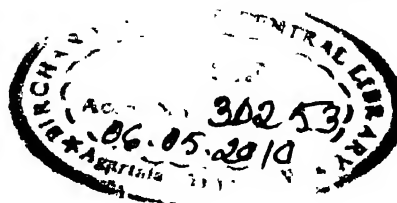
⁴ The Punjab Land Alienation Act was designed to protect the agriculturists from the clutches of the moneylenders, by forbidding the sale of land by agricultural tribes to non-agriculturists.

6. The Sind Ministry and the Congress

Editorial, *Tribune*, 19 January 1939

19 January 1939

From the speech that the Premier, K.B. Allah Bakhsh, made in the Sind Assembly on the no-confidence motion, it is clear that, in passing the Wardha Resolution, the Congress High Command was influenced by the allegation made by the Muslim Leaguers that the Congress was trying to drive a wedge into the Muslim ranks by extending its support to a Ministry which did not enjoy the confidence of the majority of the Muslim members. The allegation was on the face of it absurd. No notice of it need have been taken by the High Command while deciding the question whether the Congress should or should not accord its support to the Ministry. The main question that had created a political storm in Sind, was the enforcement of the assessment proposals,¹ but that question had, it now seems, receded to the background. The Congress High Command did not even care to examine the assessment proposals. This is what the Premier said in the Assembly on the point: 'When Sardar Patel and Maulana Abul Kalam Azad were here, they were given the impression that the present Ministry had no Muslim following and that the Congress was dividing the Muslims and running the Government. The merits of the assessment proposals had not been gone into'. As we have said above, the Congress High Command was absolutely wrong in allowing its judgment to be influenced by a baseless allegation, maliciously made by the Muslim Leaguers, who wanted to seize power, whether by hook or by crook, it took up a wholly untenable position and refused to support a Ministry, which, on merit, deserved its support. When in spite of all persuasions, K.B. Allah Bakhsh found the High Command adamant; he fell back on his own resources. Now by coming out triumphant in his encounter with the communalists, he has convulsively shown that he not only commands the support of the Hindu and European members but also of a majority of the Muslim members. Among the 32 members, who voted against the no-confidence motion, there were not less than 16 Muslims, as against 7 Muslims who went into the opposition lobby. The Ministry now commands a majority in the House and can afford to ignore the Congress party. But K.B. Allah Bakhsh is still anxious to secure the support of the Congress. Does not this prove that he is a nationalist to the core of his heart? It is understood that the Premier has again approached the Congress High Command and has solicited its support on the ground that he has fulfilled the condition on the satisfaction of which it was prepared to lend him its support.



It is difficult to say what attitude the Congress High Command will eventually take up in the matter. But there is no doubt that consistently with the position that it has taken up in the past, it can no longer withhold its support from the Ministry, especially when it has fulfilled the condition laid down by it. It is now clear beyond any shadow of doubt that the Allah Bakhsh Ministry commands the allegiance of a majority of Muslim members in the Assembly. If the Congress extends its support to it, even its worst detractors cannot accuse it of creating a division in the Muslim community and exploiting that division to its own advantage.

Of course, the question of the postponement of the assessment proposals is still there. But it is no longer a live issue in the sense in which it was when it originally created a political crisis in Sind. There is no other party in the Assembly which is prepared to give a battle to the Ministry on this issue. Those, who are opposed to the Ministry, are the communal reactionaries, who do not at all care whether the assessment proposals are enforced or not. By withholding its co-operation from the Allah Bakhsh Ministry, the Congress will simply be strengthening the hands of those reactionaries.

The very fact that K.B. Allah Bakhsh has again approached the Congress High Command for its support shows, if anything, that he will not unceremoniously reject any suggestions that will be made to him by the Congress party regarding the postponement of the assessment proposals. He will try to accommodate it as far as he possibly can. From whatever point of view we may look at the matter, we feel that the Sind Ministry deserves the support of the Congress. Though it is not a Congress Ministry in name, it has, during the last 10 months of its tenure of office, shown in a practical manner that it is as good as, if not better than, a Congress Ministry. During its short term of less than a year it has passed through many an ordeal. It has rejected with contempt the overtures of the Muslim League in spite of all threats. Though the Congress party deserted it at a time when it urgently needed its help, it is still soliciting its support. Such a Ministry deserves well of everybody. Will the Congress High Command even now withhold its support from it? It cannot say 'no' to K.B. Allah Bakhsh without betraying the cause of nationalism.

¹ In 1937 the Five-year Settlement for the Barrage area was due for revision. But the matter was postponed for a year to invite and consider objections to the proposed revised rates. When the issue was raised in the Sind Assembly, it was generally felt that there was not much of a case for enhanced rates. But the Ministry was constrained to introduce legislation before 21 July 1938, the date when the extension period was to expire. The Allah Bakhsh Ministry devised a new plan, which did not find favour with, among others, the Congress members in the Assembly. They made clear that their party would not support any scheme of land revenue that contemplated an increase in the wide-ranging discussions in the Assembly and other public bodies.

7. The Nawab of Chhatari on the Congress Ministry

'Drawing A Red Herring', Editorial, *Hindustan Times*, 21 January 1939

21 January 1939

For anything and everything which goes wrong in this country, the Muslim Leaguers must, of course, lay the blame at the door of the Congress. But we never thought that the Nawab of Chhatari could have become such a partisan in his outlook as to see every matter from that distorted angle. Before the last general election the Nawab Saheb was opposed to fighting it through communal parties; he refused to stand on the Muslim League ticket and he was one of the leading lights of the Nationalist Agriculturist Party¹ whose forces were pitched against the Congress in almost every constituency throughout the United Provinces. This party was completely routed at the polls, so much so that nobody now even hears of its name.

Like all other patriotic persons, the Nawab Saheb feels alarmed at 'the growing communal tension between various classes and communities living in this country, particularly the Hindus and Mussalmans'. In an interview to the Associated Press at Lucknow, he has tried to lay the blame for the accentuation of communal feeling on the Congress ministries. While leaving other Provincial Congress ministries to be dealt with by 'more competent', 'prominent leaders of the Muslim League, and particularly Mr Jinnah', he has given an illustration of what, in his opinion, the UP government has done to make itself open to this charge. But it is surprising that the Nawab Saheb should have argued that the communal tension was caused by the confidential circular issued by the UP government on 10 November 1938. The circular was laid on the table of the Assembly in reply to a question of his. What it stated was that the government felt that the time had come when a determined effort should be made by all officials to establish relations of mutual confidence with the district leaders of Congress organisations. The object of issuing this direction to the officials was to impress on them that the old antagonism between the administration and the Congress should not stand in the way of their cooperating with each other, in the interests of the people. How on earth this innocent circular could have caused communal tension cannot be comprehended by unsophisticated persons like ourselves. It seems that the Nawab Saheb was hard put to prove the theory which he wanted to propound. He could not spot anything wrong in the doings of the Congress government, and so he had to fasten the blame on this circular. He has tried to draw a red herring across the track; but it will fail to impress anyone about the guilt of the UP government, in this respect. If the Nawab Saheb will only put off his communal glasses, he will clearly see that the present communal tension is due to the campaign of falsehoods, vilification and calumny which is being carried on by the propagandists of the Muslim League.

The National Agriculturists' Party of Agra (NAP) was established on 5 August 1934. Nawab Muzammillullah Khan of Bhikampur was elected president; Chhatari, Mohammad Yusuf, the Nawab of Baghpat, and Jwala Prasad Srivastava were among the vice Presidents. The National Agriculturists' Party of Awadh was founded on 28 August, with Raja Rampal Singh as president.

The election results were an electoral rout for the NAP. Of its 111 candidates for the legislative assembly, only 25 were returned. The Congress won 133 seats; the Muslim League won 28 seats, all but one in Muslim constituencies. In the legislative council, the NAP won four of the 52 seats, and the Congress won eight.

8. The NWFP Ministry

'Crime in the Frontier Province', Editorial, *Tribune*, 27 January 1939

27 January 1939

Undeterred by the evasive statements made by certain Congress ministers in the Frontier Province, Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan,¹ the supreme leader of the Congress organisation in the province, has once again declared in a signed article in his journal, *Pukhtun*, that the responsibility for the increase in crime in the province rests not with the Congress ministry, but with permanent officials. 'Some people', says the great leader, 'hold the ministry responsible for this disorder and increase in crime, but what can the ministry do unless officials in subordinate departments extend to it their whole-hearted cooperation and help?' The answer, of course, is obvious, and it is strange that it has not occurred to the leader. If subordinate officials do not cooperate with the ministers, the ministers should definitely seek their removal. It is no answer to this contention to say, as Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan does, that the ministers cannot only not remove them by the exercise of their own authority but cannot even deduct a pie from their pay. If they cannot remove them or otherwise punish them for their lack of cooperation, surely they can make their removal or their punishment

an issue between themselves and the Governor. Is there a single case in which they have done so? On the contrary, has not the ministry virtually denied the existence of any lack of cooperation between the services and itself?

It is perfectly true, as Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan says, that 'the Congress in the Frontier, as in other provinces, accepted the ministry because the British Government assured it that in its nation-building activities as well as in running the administration in the interests of the country it would have the support of Governors'. But does not that very fact make it only possible for, but actually incumbent on, the Congress, in any important case in which the support or cooperation of the Governor is withheld or refused in respect of any of the legitimate activities of the ministry to throw up the responsibility of office? What is the use of saying that you accepted office in a province on the basis of a certain assurance if when you find that that assurance remains unfulfilled you neither try to secure its fulfillment nor make its non-fulfillment a ground for throwing up office? If the consequence of throwing up office in such circumstances is a constitutional deadlock, public opinion, both in the province and outside, will know at whose door to lay the responsibility for it. As long as the Congress neither gives up office in the province nor makes any public declaration either about the lack of cooperation on the part of the Services or about differences between itself and the Governor as regards the manner of dealing with recalcitrant officials, it must accept the sole responsibility for the existence of the present unhappy conditions in the province, including the increase in crime and lawlessness.

Known as the 'Frontier Gandhi', Ghaffar Khan (1890–1989) was one of the most charismatic leaders in the nationalist movement. He was the leader of an extraordinary group—the Khudai Khidmatgars—which adhered to non-violence in its pursuit of freedom and independence. Ghaffar Khan was a front rank Congress leader in the 1930s and 1940s and actively participated in the Gandhian movements. He went to jail on numerous occasions and was repeatedly expelled from the North-West Frontier Province.

9. The UP Tenancy Bill

Haig to Linlithgow, 24 January 1939, Haig Papers, Microfilm Roll No. 1, NMML

My dear Lord Linlithgow,

I have just returned to Allahabad after a short tour in Benares and Gorakhpur, including also a flying visit to Lucknow to make contact with my Ministers. I found them very friendly, and apparently satisfied with the way things are going. We have had a little rain in most parts of the Province within the last two or three days, but the amount has been disappointing, and in the Agra division where the need is greatest they have had next to none.

2. I am very much in sympathy with what your Excellency said in your letter of 6th January about the landlords. Their present position is very unenviable, and quite apart from their attitude towards such a measure as the Tenancy Bill, they feel that the whole foundation of their position is swaying beneath them. It would be more than one could expect from human nature if they did not feel that we are in large measure responsible for this change, and that their loyalty in the past has been ill-requited. I always try to encourage them and urge them to take a less despairing view of the future, and to realise that they still have considerable power and opportunities. But many of them feel that their position is slipping away from them the whole time.

3. The Tenancy Bill continues on its course uneventfully, and it looks as if it should be through the Assembly before the end of February. It is in my opinion a very significant fact, which can be put against a good many of the more gloomy possibilities that I have been dwelling upon recently, that the Bill, which is certainly not an extreme measure, appears to be going through practically

unchanged. This shows that on a major question of policy like this, moderate Congressmen are having their own way. There was some talk at one stage recently of some impractical and dangerous provisions for giving land to landless labourers. This, however, was provoked entirely by the rather infantile sense of tactics of certain of the landlords, who thought that it was a master stroke to oppose the Tenancy Bill by attacking the Government for not having gone further and made provision for the landless labourer. The Government eventually hit back with these proposals, whereupon fancy the landlords realised the folly of their proceedings, and I think the whole matter will drop.

4. The Principles for the fixation of rent have gone through practically unchanged. This is a point of great importance, for as I have mentioned in previous letters, the Ministers have been strongly pressed by the left wing to carry out drastic rent reductions, which I am assured would be impossible under the provisions of the Tenancy Bill as they stand. I mentioned in para 3 of my letter of 10th January that I had a somewhat disquieting report from the Revenue Secretary on this point, but that I was not disposed to attach too much importance to it. This attitude seems to have been justified. When I saw Pant recently in Lucknow, I tackled him on this question of rent reduction, and said that it seemed to me very little rent reduction would be possible if the principles laid down in the Tenancy Bill were observed and if we were not prepared to sacrifice the financial stability of the Province. He said that he still hoped to be able to do something within those limitations. I observed that anything possible would come very short of the 8 crores which I understood had been mentioned at Ayodhya, and he replied that people at conferences were not very strong in arithmetic. I think this conversation is very reassuring on this crucial point.

5. I also asked Pant about the statement attributed to the Revenue Minister at the Ayodhya Conference, that the Government had decided to remit all the suspended arrears of rent. I said I did not remember any Government decision on this point. He said that while it was true that a year ago there had been talk of coupling remissions of the suspended arrears with conditions about payment of the current rents, the position had changed now by the passage of time, and that it had become clear that they must remit all these arrears. They would in due course introduce the necessary legislation. I am inclined myself to agree that things have now gone so far that it is really not possible to take any other course than to remit these arrears. But there will be a great outcry from the landlords, even though I expect few of them have any expectation of ever getting these arrears. But they will demand, and with considerable justice, that Government should refund the revenue which has been paid on the basis of these rents. There is also the danger that this action will affect the collection of current rents. These are points which I shall certainly press on the attention of the Ministers.

6. On the whole I have been getting an impression during the last fortnight that the right wing have closed their ranks and are standing more firm. I spoke to Pant about the proceedings at Ayodhya and said I was afraid they were not very encouraging for the Government. He expressed surprise and said that he had been quite satisfied. I said that according to the public reports the conference seemed to have concentrated rather on what had not been done than on what had been done; but he said that in his opinion the achievements of the Ministry had been fully appreciated, though no doubt people wanted quicker results. He spoke with a good deal of confidence, and it seems to me that in fact his position has not been at all shaken by the Ayodhya Conference; nor his policy affected. He seems to be going on precisely on the same lines as before. This is decidedly encouraging.

A. The main features of the Tenancy Bill were:

- i. Practically all tenants were given hereditary rights in the land under their cultivation.

- ii. The right of possessing land as 'Sir' was confined to 50 acres only, releasing a large 'Sir' area from the hands of the zamindars and allowing the sub-tenants the possession of this released area to become hereditary tenants.
- iii. Right of constructing a residential house on his land and also of planting trees.
- iv. Rent rates on a basis of 1/5th of the produce of the land.
- v. Landlords were required to issue receipts for rent realised.
- vi. Proceedings of arrest for arrears of rent was abolished.
- vii. Ejectment for arrears of rent was allowed only when the arrear did not exceed one year's rent, but the decreed arrear could be realised in instalments.
- viii. No exactions excepting legal rent could now be realised from the tenants.
- ix. Tenants were given the right to claim abatement of rent which was in excess of proportion laid in the Act.

10. The Sind Ministry

'Confusing Situation in Sind', Editorial, *Tribune*, 28 January 1939

28 January 1939

In the course of a speech delivered by him at Calcutta, Subhas Chandra Bose¹ said that 'it was possible to have a Congress- Coalition Ministry in Sind if the Congress wanted it.' This is true. But the situation in Sind is daily changing, and what is possible today, may not be possible a few days hence. The relations between K.B. Allah Bakhsh and the Congress Assembly party are not at all cordial. This is apparent from the passage-at-arms that took place in the Assembly during the last few days between the Premier and some members of the Congress party. We do not know if K.B. Allah Bakhsh is still corresponding with the Congress High Command for a rapprochement between the Ministry and the Congress party. But from the latest developments it appears that he is not sure of having the support of the Congress. This is the reason why the Premier is thinking of expanding his Cabinet, by adding two Ministers, or even four, if that would bring stability to his Ministry. 'Democracy today means,' he told a press correspondent, 'a counting of heads. And if my progress and stability depends upon the counting of heads, I will certainly count them'. The meaning of this statement is quite clear. It is an admission of the fact that the recent defeat of the no-confidence motion has not stabilized the position of the Ministry. The Premier is still not free from anxiety on that score. He is trying to bring new members into his fold. In this attempt he has partially succeeded. It is stated that he has the support of the entire Mir Group as well as Ghulam Hussain Hidayatullah. What price he will have to pay for this support will be known when new additions to the Cabinet are announced.

But all these unexpected developments are taking place because K.B. Allah Bakhsh has been left in the lurch by the Congress. If the Congress even now decides to go over to the side of the Ministry, the political situation in Sind will automatically change. Today the Congress party in the Sind Assembly occupies the main Opposition benches. The Muslim Leaguers are trying to exploit this situation. They are thinking of dissolving their own party and forming a 'democratic party' with the help of 4 or 5 Hindus who have seceded from the Ministerial party. G.M. Syed,² the leader of the Muslim Leaguers, in the course of a talk with pressmen, stated that 'he was confident of reclaiming six or seven Muslims from the Ministerialist group, who, it is stated, had voted with Khan Bahadur Allah Bakhsh only in order to ensure stability'. If they were certain of a stable government being provided by the proposed democratic party, with the moral, if not actual, support of the Congress, they would rejoin Mr Syed. On similar grounds they expect 'two

Independents (Mr Jamshed¹ and Mr Bechar) and three Europeans to support them'. It is difficult to believe that the Congress Party will accord its support, actual or moral, to the 'democratic party', which will contain communalists and reactionaries. Nor do we believe that the democratic party will ever be able to form a stable Ministry. Whatever may happen in future, there is no doubt that politics in Sind are today in a confused state. It is still in the power of the Congress to remove this confusion. Will it have the statesmanship to do so?

¹ Subhas Chandra Bose (1897–1945); educated in Calcutta and England; appeared for the ICS examination in 1920; returned to India in July 1921 before completing his year of probation and plunged into Bengal politics as a follower of C R Das. He was in the thick of various nationalist campaigns, organising the boycott of the Prince of Wales' visit to Calcutta in 1921, for which he was put in jail in Mandalay until 1927, taking part in trade union activities and participating in the Salt Satyagraha movement in 1930. He was elected president of the Haripura Congress in 1938, but was thereafter embroiled in a factional struggle with the Congress right-wing. In April 1939 he relinquished the Congress Presidentship and founded the Forward Bloc in May 1939. In early January 1942, 'Netaji', as he was fondly described, left India to organise, with the aid of the Germans and the Japanese, the Azad Hind Fauj, the Indian National Army (INA). He was reportedly killed in an air crash on 18 August 1945.

² Ghulam Murtaza Syed (b. 1904) was one Gandhi's devoted followers in Sind and a champion of the interests of the impoverished Sind peasantry. He joined the Muslim League following his differences with the Congress leadership, including Sardar Patel, and became its President in 1938 and a minister in 1940. After Partition, he was one of the architects of the Pakistan People's Party.

³ Jamshed Nusserwanji (b. 1886) was a leading merchant of Sind, mayor of Karachi (1933–4), Chairman of the Sind Co-operative Bank, member of the Sind Legislative Assembly and vice-President of the Indian Chambers of Commerce.

11. The Sind Ministry and the Congress

'Allah Bakhsh's Declaration', *Tribune*, 29 January 1939

29 January 1939

'The Sind Government has repeatedly declared that they will follow the Congress policy and programme. Despite the Assembly Congress Group's withdrawal of support to the Ministry and individual differences here and there and also the possibility of Cabinet expansion, I reiterate that the Cabinet would continue to follow the Congress policy and programme' affirmed the Premier, K.B. Allah Bakhsh replying to the debate on the Congress motion recommending to the Government to take early legislative measure to regulate relations between zamindars and *haris* (agriculturists) so as to prevent imposition of all unjust exactions.¹

Continuing the Premier observed:

'In the event of disagreement, I shall have no objection to referring the matter to arbitration of the Congress High Command, the Government having openly declared the policy, which stood unchanged'. He had no desire to put the Congress party in the wrong.

The Premier next took the House into confidence and said that the Government were not sleeping over the matter and detailed the steps the Government had taken with a view to putting the relations between zamindars and *haris* on an equitable basis.²

The Premier stated that the Government would most sympathetically consider the question of wiping out *Haris*' debts beyond a certain limit and lessening the burden of interest charges.

The Congress motion was then withdrawn.³

¹ He stated in the Assembly on 26 January 1939, 'It is under the contemplation of this Government that, when the relationship between the *haris* and the zamindars is defined, one of the necessary reliefs would be that no interest should be charged to the *haris*'. *Proceedings of the Sind Legislative Assembly, Official Report*, Vol. VI, no. 17, Thursday, the 26th January 1939, p. 78.

² The Haris were the impoverished peasantry of Sind tied to the zamindars and subjected to ruthless exploitation. Their plight was a subject of debate in the Sind legislative assembly, as on 10 January 1939, and on 26 January when H.S. Pannani introduced a resolution asking the government to provide relief to the Haris from the Famine Relief Fund. Among those who supported the resolution were G.M. Sayed, Newandram Vishindas, Jamshed Nusserwanjee, Shaikh Abdul Majid and R.K. Sidhwa. The resolution was defeated by 14 votes.

³ The Congress recommended to the Government to take early legislative measures to regulate relations between zamindars and Haris so as to prevent imposition of all unjust exactions.

12. Congress Ministry in Assam: Zetland to Linlithgow, 29 January 1939

Zetland Papers, Acc. No. 1969, NAI

Apart from this tiresome campaign by Congress against the Princes, the Congress Ministers in the Provinces seem to be behaving reasonably. This is notably the case in Assam where the Congress Prime Minister¹ appears to be conducting the affairs of the province with considerably greater success than his predecessor.² He seems, for example, to have been both helpful and successful in the case of the boycott of the Dibru-Sadiya Railway, and it would be interesting to have Reid's³ opinion on the relative merits of the present Government and its predecessor. I do not know whether you would feel disposed to ask him for his observations on this point? There is little doubt, I should suppose, that the Congress are able to supply Ministers of greater ability, particularly in Provinces like Assam, than other parties can do, and, broadly speaking, the Congress Ministers appear to be pleasant enough persons for the Governor to work with. The risk of this increase in the influence of the Congress in the Provincial Governments is, of course, that, however moderate and agreeable the Ministers may be while functioning in normal times, they are liable at a time of crisis to be called out by the Congress High Command and so to bring the working of the constitution to an abrupt finish.

¹ Gopinath Bardoloi (1890-1950) joined the non cooperation movement in 1921 and was a front-rank Congress leader in Assam. He led the Congress in the Assam Assembly and was the architect of the coalition ministry formed in October 1938.

² Syed Mohammad Sadullah (1885-1955); member, Assam legislative Council, 1913-20 and 1923; minister for education and agriculture, 1924-29; prime minister in the coalition ministry, 1937-September 1938; joined the Muslim League and was a key figure in promoting its ideology in Assam.

³ See, End Note 1 to Linlithgow to Zetland, 7 February 1939, below.

13. Viceroy's meeting with B.R. Ambedkar:

Linlithgow to Zetland, 31 January 1939

Zetland Papers, Acc. No. 1971, NAI

.... I had a talk with Ambedkar¹ whom I found very interesting. He appears to be emerging as a sort of rival, though at the present stage of not too important a type, to the Congress Ministry, and told me bluntly that he believed they would lose the next election and that he would be in. Lumley² tells me that he thinks Ambedkar is, in fact, beginning to emerge to a degree which his Ministry finds slightly embarrassing, and Kher³ has, it appears, instructed the police to keep a very close watch on his speeches, which have been of a somewhat violent character. With me he was cynical and amusing, and, I should have said, realist. On the States side, he did not conceal that he was in no way concerned by that problem, save to the extent that it directly reacted on his own, and that it suited his own politics, the obligations of the Crown Representative to the States would carry very little weight with him. He is perhaps a little of a swashbuckler; but I should have said he was of good quality and would be a useful colleague if he could be harnessed. Incidentally, he

vouchsafed the view that Congress will suffer a sharp set-back in the elections for the Bombay Municipality, which are due to take place about 7th February. Ministers, on the other hand, assured me that Congress will for the first time achieve an independent majority in the Council, or at least go very near to securing a majority. By the time you read this, we shall know who has been right in their estimate.

¹ Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar (1891–1956); born of Mahar parents who lived in a village in Ratnagiri district; educated in Satara and Bombay before joining the Columbia University where he obtained both a MA and a doctorate degree (1916); returned to India after a brief stint at the London School of Economics; taught in Bombay (1918–20) before starting his legal practice in 1924; entered into journalism as a crusader for the rights of the depressed classes; launched satyagraha in December 1927 and in March 1930 for the rights of the untouchables; attended the Round Table Conferences in London (1930–33); member of the Bombay legislative assembly (1926–34); concluded the Poona Pact with Gandhi who went on fast unto death on 20 September 1932 in protest against separate electorates granted to the untouchables in the Communal Award; member of the Governor-General's executive council (1942–46); one of the main architects of India's Constitution; embraced Buddhism on 14 October 1956. Ambedkar was a prolific writer, a perceptive journalist and a relentless crusader for securing the rights of the downtrodden and weaker sections of society.

² Lawrence Roger Lumley (b. 1896); educated at Eton, Sandhurst and Oxford, elected as a Conservative MP, 1922–29; Under-secretary of State for the Colonies; assumed charge as governor of Bombay in 1937. His predecessor was Brabourne (b. 1893), who was appointed governor of Bombay in 1933 after serving as parliamentary secretary to Samuel Hoare.

³ Bal Gangadhar Kher (1888–1957) first rose to prominence as secretary of the Bombay branch of the Swaraj Party and later as a Satyagrahi during Gandhi's Civil Disobedience movement. He was chief minister of Bombay, from 1937 to 1939 and again from 1946 to 1952.

14. The Report of the Madras Estates Land Act Enquiry Committee, 1939

Madras Legislative Council Debates, 30–31 January and 3 February 1939, Vol. VI, Nos 1–6, pp. 227–28, 287–95 and 479–80

The Hon. Sri T. Prakasam: 'Mr President, I beg to move—"that the Report of the Madras Estates Land Act Committee be taken into consideration".'

After the report was presented to the House, more than two months' time has been given to hon. Members so that all might have time to go through the Report and be ready to discuss it. The Report was considered in the Assembly for seven days and it has now come up before this House. I take it that hon. Members of this House have studied the Report and have also followed the discussion in the Legislative Assembly. I wish to refer to the recommendations of the Committee as briefly as possible.

There were nine members including the Chairman on this Committee. The majority, namely, five, have made their recommendations. The Raja Sahib of Mirzapuram directly representing the landholders has recorded his minute of dissent. His minute of dissent deals with each of the questions referred to the Committee for consideration and report. He has repudiated each point, one by one. There are three others who though they have appended what they have called minutes of dissent, have agreed with the majority on many points as they themselves have stated and they have narrowed down their contention by stating on what matters they differ. My hon. Friend, Mr Rangaswami Ayyangar agrees with the majority on all the points including the question of rent but he took a different view with regard to the final recommendation; after agreeing even on the question of the correctness of the finding with regard to rents, he has made alternative proposals with regard to that and has given special reasons. My hon. Friend, Mr Narayanaswami Nayudu, though he agreed with the findings of the majority on most of the points, has made his position clear with regard to the question on which he did not agree. Then there is the hon. Mr Mahoob

Ali Baig who also generally agreed with most of the points and has given some reasons where he differed from the findings of the Committee. I have stated this with a view to show that out of four members who did not agree with the majority, only one member, i.e., the Raja of Mirzapuram, recorded his minute of dissent on each one of the points directly repudiating the findings of the majority.

The first question related to the ownership of the soil, whether it is vested in the landholder or in the ryot. The second question, it was an important question, relates to the irrigation sources, their ownership and the rights involved therein. The third important matter relates to the forests, communal lands and porambokes. The fourth and the most important is the question relating to fair and equitable rents. What is a fair and equitable rent? Is it the rent that is prevailing to-day as is contended by the landholders, relying upon certain sections of the Estates Land Act which laid down certain rules of presumptions; or is it the rent that was fixed, permanently and unalterably, as I shall explain to the House presently, in 1802 at the time of the Permanent Settlement?

Those who may not have been acquainted with the whole history between 1802 and to-day may have thought at first that the proposal to go back to 1802 is all imaginary and not based on facts. There is no question of law involved in this matter. It is a pure and simple question of fact; a fact which, when once looked into dispassionately and without prejudice, must be admitted by all. What happened at the time of the Permanent Settlement, and why is it contended now, after 138 years that the rates of rent that were fixed in 1802 should be taken as fair and equitable and that only these rates should be collected by the landholder from the ryots hereafter and that these should have been taken without the least alteration during the past so many years?

I put the case before the hon. Members of this House, Sir, by stating that at the time of the Permanent Settlement, the arrangement was made that the land revenue that should be paid to the Government should be first fixed, viz., a share or proportion of the gross produce or net produce should be set apart as land revenue payable by the ryots to the Government. After ascertaining the share of produce that should be set apart as land revenue due to the Government, it had to be settled as to who should collect that revenue for the Government, that is, whether the amount should be collected by the Government themselves, as in the case of ryotwari areas, or it should be collected through certain agents. Then, after the agency question is settled, what should be the terms of agreement between the agents who should collect the land revenue and the Government? In the northern districts half the gross produce was set apart towards the land revenue payable to the Government; in the southern districts it was not invariably gross produce; generally it was on the basis of net produce. In either case, as soon as the gross produce or the net produce payable as land revenue was fixed, it was arranged that two-thirds of the land revenue fixed permanently and unalterably should be paid to the Government as peshkash and one-third should be taken by the landholder as consideration for doing the collection work. If the material on which these conclusions of the Permanent Settlement are based are convincing, it is for the hon. Members of the House to decide here and now whether they should be accepted as binding or they should be rejected. I agree, Sir, that if it is true that the permanent arrangement made at the time of the Permanent Settlement was to the effect that the land revenue was fixed permanently and unalterably first, and that from out of such land revenue two-thirds was agreed to be paid as peshkash to the Government by the landholder, and one-third was agreed to be taken by him as consideration for doing the collection work, it is easy to understand the position. If there is anything wrong in that, of course, various contentions might be raised.

I do not wish to take hon. Members of the House straight to 1802 and begin to establish my position by quoting evidence from the bottom. I would like to point out to hon. Members of the House that what is stated by me just now as the arrangement or the understanding or the agreement

at the time of the Permanent Settlement, continued to be recognized as the correct basis up-to-date and at every stage of legislation that was undertaken in the past, attempted or dropped. Then the matter will become very simple. I say, Sir, that the permanent and unalterable character of the land revenue and of the portion set apart for the landholders' consideration has been maintained even under the Estates Land Act, if not wholly by embodying those very sections, i.e., sections 7 and 9 of the Patta Regulation *en bloc*, partially at least by having adopted them in certain sections of the Estates Land Act. It was the Hon. Mr Forbes that introduced the Estates Land Bill of 1908. His speech, I take it, is in the hands of every member of this House. He has stated in that speech and he has made the position clear in more than one place by stating what the arrangement at the time of the Permanent Settlement was. He has said in so many words that at the time of the Permanent Settlement, the share of the Government for revenue was first fixed, and out of that, two-thirds was fixed as the permanent and unalterable sum for peshkash payable to the Government, and one-third as the remuneration for the landholder. He quoted Regulation XXX of 1802 known as the Patta Regulation. He referred to sections 7 and 9 of the Patta Regulation and discussed those provisions with a view to point out that the land revenue was fixed permanently and unalterably, that two-thirds of the land revenue was permanently and unalterably fixed as peshkash and the other one-third portion was given to the landholder as remuneration, and that the peshkash continued to be permanent and unalterable from that date until now and that the balance that was allowed to landholders from out of the permanent and unalterable figure of the land revenue should have remained unalterable. There is no complication in this; there is no question of law in this; nobody need be confused about this, and no one need be startled about this. When once it was settled permanently in 1802, when once land revenue was fixed irrevocably in 1802, when once two-thirds of that amount was fixed as peshkash payable to the Government; when once that two-thirds had been paid from that date until to-day, without adding a single copper to it, what justification can there be for enhancing the other one-third that was given as allowance for doing collection work in any year or any period? This is a simple question, a question of commonsense and nothing else. The only thing that the Committee has done is to look into all those records, find out where these things are, remove the earth under which they were covered, as it were, and place them before the Legislature that appointed it to do this duty.

Strangely enough, everything is denied by the landholders. The Permanent Settlement arrangement is denied; the fact that the land revenue was fixed permanently and from out of that amount two-thirds were paid to the Government as an unalterable amount as peshkash and the other one-third was allowed to the landholder, is not admitted by the landholders even to-day. It was not admitted by those who represented their predecessors or themselves at the time of the Estates Land Act; it was not admitted at the time of the Rent Recovery Act; it was not admitted at the time of the Tenancy Bill of 1885; it was not admitted at the time of Tenancy Bill of 1898 and it is not admitted today. I shall try to place before the hon. Members of this House what the Hon. Mr Crole who was the Revenue Member in 1898 said on this matter—Mr Crole's speech is also in the hands of the hon. Members of this House.

'What the Government did in 1802 was this. It was quite properly assumed that all interests in land were confined to two parties, namely, the Sovereign power and the cultivator. It then proceeded to make a contract with a third party called a zamindar. Under that contract, the zamindar took the place of the Government in respect of collection of revenue which was calculated on the average of the receipts obtained during the management of the Company's officers, or under their supervision, extending over a series of years. Out of these receipts, roughly, two-thirds were to be paid to Government as peshkash which was unalterably fixed for all time and the remaining third was to be retained by the zamindar. In other words, if 50 per cent of the gross produce was set

aside for the ryot, out of the balance, 35 parts went to Government and 15 to the zamindar. The shadowy, undefined claim of State 'proprietaryship' of the soil was likewise transferred to him. But the ryot remained quite unaffected by the terms of this contract. It could not of its own operation affect the rights of existing cultivators any usage or custom tending to protect those of future cultivators or any power of the legislature to interfere from time to time for the protection of those rights. The ownership of the soil was not transferred under the contract, for, Government could not pass on to the zamindar what it did not itself possess.' (Interruption.)

I have finished Forbes, Sir, I did not read the passage. I requested the attention of hon. Members to the speech. I stated orally what the Hon. Mr Forbes said at the time of the Estates Land Act in 1908. I am taking hon. Members of the House to 1898, that is ten years before the Estates Land Act and I am quoting the words of the Hon. Mr Crole. Various documents have been printed in the Appendices to show to the hon. Members of the House the process adopted for arriving at these figures. The Special Commission Reports for the North, South as well as the West, have all been printed to show the basis of calculation, how the figures were arrived at and how when certain methods adopted by the Special Officers who were put in charge of preparing the material for the Permanent Settlement made them commit mistakes, they were corrected, and they were revised; all these things are shown in some of the Special Commission Reports. I have started with 1908, gone back to the 1898 Bill and now I am going further back to 1865, to the Rent Recovery Act. I am submitting, Sir, that in clause 10 of the Rent Recovery Bill of 1863, sections 7 and 9 of the Patta Regulation were bodily introduced. Section 7 of the Patta Regulation is to the effect that there should be no enhancement, no addition to the taxes that ought to be collected from the ryots under any pretext or for whatsoever reason. Having so laid down in section 7, in section 9 it was laid down, 'In spite of our making everything permanent and unalterable, in this human world so long as courts are established, parties may be coming to courts with some plea or other against these unfortunate men and these ryots may be dragged into courts. If they should be drawn into courts and a dispute relates to the rents or the rates that they have to pay, we simply direct the presiding officer to go back to the year 1801 and adopt the rate that was fixed then as the rate that should be adopted as permanent and unalterable.' That was the direction in section 9 of the Patta Regulation. These two sections were introduced bodily in clause 10 of the Rent Bill of 1863. For that Bill to become law finally, it took two years. There was a Select Committee appointed. First there was a proposal to introduce a Revenue Code copying bodily the Bengal Rules. But, that was not accepted. Finally taking a few portions of that proposed Code, this Rent Bill was introduced. In that Rent Bill, as I stated, to make the position of the ryot clear, these two sections 7 and 9 were introduced bodily. The matter went up to the Select Committee. The Select Committee stated in their report that they accepted the findings of the Board of Revenue of Madras made in their Proceedings No. 7743 of 1864. The Board dealt with the Patta Regulation. They held that the rent or the revenue paid by the ryot was fixed permanently and unalterably in 1802; that the landholder was not entitled to enhance the rent; that if he should be given the right to enhance the rent and hand over the land to another man, who offers a higher rate, it would be allowing the man to rob the ryot and pay a portion of the plunder to the landholder. That was the language used by the Board in their Proceedings No. 7743 of 1864. This was accepted by the Select Committee and they said, 'These findings are correct and the rent should not be enhanced and it should remain unalterable.' Then when they came to the passing of the Act they said in their report also 'While we accept these findings we shall have to amplify the provisions for certain reasons.' Section 11 of the Rent Recovery Act thus came into being. That section 11 did not embody sections 7 and 9 of the Patta Regulation as clause 10 of the Bill did, but they put in a different form making a provision for enhancement as in clause 4 and in certain provisos.

This section 11 of the Rent Recovery Act started the trouble for the ryots. What was this Rent Recovery Act? Was it an Act which was intended to create any rights in favour of the landholders or in favour of the ryots? No. It is not so. It was a processual law. The object of the Act was merely to prescribe a certain procedure to enable the landholders defined under section 1 of that Act to collect the moneys due to them. That was not an Act which was intended to deal with the relations between the landholders and their ryots alone. That was an Act in which under section 1, landholders were divided into two classes. The first class, consisted of the zamiridars, shrotriyamdars, inamdars, etc., and other proprietors. Very many of the hon. Members may not have noticed—even those who have had occasion to apply these sections in the early days of their practice may not have noticed—that the Rent Recovery Act made provision for the recovery of moneys due to Government ryots from their tenants also. The Government ryot of the ryotwari area was included as landholder under the second classification in section 1 of the Rent Recovery Act. The Government ryot is a free-holder. That is known to everyone. The Government ryot lets his land to anybody, enters into an arrangement with him under a lease or an agreement and he is free to enhance rents, to decrease rents and to do whatever he likes. That was the position of the second class of landholders provided for in the Rent Recovery Act. They had to make a provision to enable that landholder, the Government ryot to increase rent or to reduce the rent or to enter into any arrangement he liked with his tenant. That Government ryot is clubbed with this landholder, the zamindar.

Section 11 of the Rent Recovery Act had to provide the procedure for both classes of landholders. Therefore they introduced certain clauses there with regard to recovery of moneys. The first clause related to contracts. The contract could apply only to the ryotwari land on which rent could be enhanced. That contract cannot be said to apply to the zamindar whose terms were settled at the time of the Permanent Settlement permanently and unalterably. If the contract could be taken to apply to the landholders of the first class also it is only with reference to the Permanent Settlement contract and could not have been anything else. The second clause relates to the survey rates of 1859 and the third clause deals with the local usage and custom. All these things you will find in section 9 of the Patta Regulation also. If the original rates were not fixed, what should be fixed is referred to in the Patta Regulation. If the parties are not satisfied with these rates they will have to go back to the established waram rate of 1801. That was the scheme of section 11 of the Rent Recovery Act.

The evil days of the ryot started when the courts began to interpret this section 11. What did the courts do? In the beginning there was no trouble at all. Before the High Court was established on this beach and the judges came from London to preside over this court and decide cases under the Rent Recovery Act, there were judges of the Adalat Court. The Adalat Court judges were men who had lived in this country, who had studied the land revenue questions and who had understood the common law of the country. They were the men who took part in the framing of the Regulations that presided over those courts. So there was no difficulty at all with regard to solving this problem whenever a question of dispute came between the landholder and the ryot so long as the Sadar Adalat Court was in charge of this. I may tell the hon. Members of this House about one small case that came up for trial before the Sadar Adalat Court ten years after the Permanent Settlement Regulations were passed. That was a case filed by the firewood merchants of Masulipatam who were obstructed from getting timber from the forests. The question came before the Sadar Adalat Court and they decided it by saying: 'Were these people entitled or not before the permanent regulations were passed to take timber from the forests? If they were entitled to do it then, they are entitled to do it now.' That goes to prove the title also to some extent. It was this case that was referred to in the Board's Proceedings No. 7743 which I referred to just now. I am submitting, Sir, now that the rights that were settled permanently and unalterably, the rents that were settled in

1802, remain unaltered, generally speaking, until 1865 when alone this Patta Regulation was repealed. The sections 7 and 9 of the Patta Regulation were on the statute-book and remained as the law until 1865. Not only did they remain as law till 1865 but they remained as law until even 1885 when another Tenancy Bill was put up and dropped subsequently. Therefore, it is not correct to suppose that I am putting the case generally when these rents were being enhanced by the landholders from 1802 until now and that they have been enjoying the fruits of the enhanced rents until now. Mr Crole has referred in his speech to this fact. Referring to the Collector's report he said: 'The rates of the Permanent Settlement have remained and are on record until now.' You will find again, Sir, in 1885 when an attempt was made in the Bill to introduce for the first time some of the rules of the Bengal Tenancy Act with a view to enhance this rent then the Board of Revenue pointed out: 'Why should this attempt be made now to introduce that Bengal rule into our Presidency; here the matters have been different. We have been getting on smoothly until now and there has not been any serious or general attempt to enhance the rent here after they were permanently fixed in 1802.' I am sorry I am not able to place this in a printed form in the hands of the hon. Members but they will permit me to read, Sir, from the stock file relating to the Bill of 1885:

'Besides the above opinions, attention is drawn to those recorded in Board's Proceedings, dated 1 September 1884, No. 3050, on Mr Carmichael's Bill. The general opinion was that any legislation which had more for its object than the amendment of Act VIII of 1865, where necessary, would be probably mischievous; and among those papers, the opinion of Mr H.J. Stokes is particularly worth recalling at the present time. He said then: 'The objects of a tenancy Bill ought to be to ensure the payment of a fair rent on the one hand and security of tenure on the other. If these objects are not attained, there certainly results disorder. In this Presidency, in all the settled estates with which I am acquainted, we have a customary rent, and all that is wanted is to ascertain and record it. Hitherto, no general attempt has been made by zamindars to exceed it and things may be said to have gone on very smoothly in Madras, when we compare the record of our estates with the constantly recurring troubles which have been experienced in Bengal. There the landlord was armed with power to evict and enhance and the cultivator was forgotten. It is to correct the results of this long neglect that a vigorous effort is now being made. But seeing that our circumstances have been so different, it is most improbable that an enactment framed specially to meet those of Bengal should be copied in our Presidency without great danger.'

From this it is clear that the rents of 1802 have prevailed until 1885 as well and how when an attempt was made to introduce the clause to enhance the rents from the Bengal Code in the proposed Bill, the Board of Revenue protested against the whole thing. In that Bill, Sir, an attempt was made to introduce a clause of the Bengal Code to the effect that for acquiring occupancy right, there must be possession for twelve years. Referring to that clause, this Board in another place in continuation of the same, said: 'That clause should not be introduced here, because here the question of occupancy right or the right of the ryot is in no way disputed. Why should we introduce it from the Bengal Code to the effect that if a man is in possession for twelve years, he would acquire the right? Thereby you are interfering with the existing right of the ryot. Why should you say that a man should be in possession for twelve years to establish his right? The right has already been accepted here and it is a matter of declaration. So why should we introduce it here?' When this protest was entered into on this and other matters, that attempted legislation of 1885 was dropped. You will find that what was dropped in 1885 Bill appears in the Estates Land Act I of 1908, which is said to be a document that should not be interfered with. How is it that it appears now in the Estates Land Act I of 1908? It has appeared under the name of 'old waste.' That expression 'old waste' created such a confusion in the minds of practicing lawyers, that even

well-versed practitioners here in the City found it difficult. (Sri T.C. Srinivasa Ayyangar: 'It was dropped.') The hon. Member tells me that it has been dropped. I am aware of it. We have also written in our report that it has been dropped. We have also pointed out that the old waste mistake was there for thirty years. We have also pointed out that other sections introduced should also have been dropped, but were not dropped, because those who were responsible were not there in 1936. That is how the whole mischief has been caused. That is why the Committee has recommended the repeal of that Act altogether. It is not an Act that could be amended by any small amendments, because it is in these sections that they have tampered with the rights of the ryots in a manner that cannot be discovered, which I shall be referring to shortly.

Although the definition of 'old waste' was objected to in the Bill of 1885 it found a place in the Act of 1908. It was sought to be brought in the Act of 1895, but it was dropped. But in the Act of 1908 somehow it was introduced. The 1905 Bill was introduced, not by Mr Crole, but Mr Ross and seconded by another European gentleman, and later on, the Bill was piloted by the Hon. Mr Forbes. Now what are the provisions contained in the Bill of 1898 which hon. Members should remember? These are rather important provisions of that Bill—not that I have adopted the provisions of that Bill *en bloc*. But we have modified the provisions wherever we did not agree and introduced only such of those provisions with which we agree in the draft Bill that we are presenting to-day. What did that Bill say with regard to fair and equitable rent? Section 17 of that Bill which is printed in the Appendices Volume clearly lays down that enhancements may be made with regard to one class of lands. Lands upon which rents had been fixed were exempted in the Bill as introduced in 1895. Section 17 of that Bill which will be found on page 615 of the Appendices Volume says:

'Where an occupancy ryot holds at a money-rent not fixed in perpetuity, the proprietor may, subject to the provisions of this Act, institute a suit before the Collector to enhance the rent on one or more of the following grounds, namely:

- (a) that there has been rise in the average local prices of staple food crops in the taluk or zamindari division since the existing rent was fixed;
- (b) that the productive powers of the land held by the ryot have been increased by an improvement effected by, or at the expense of, the proprietor since the existing rent was fixed;
- (c) that the productive powers of the land held by the ryot have been increased, since the existing rent was fixed, by any work of irrigation or other improvement executed at the expense of Government, and the proprietor has been required to pay an additional revenue or rate to Government in consequence thereof;
- (d) that the productive powers of the land held by the ryot have been increased by fluvial action.'

These four clauses, it was declared in the Bill as introduced then, should apply only to lands on which rents were not fixed in perpetuity. The contention on behalf of the ryots is that the rents had been fixed in perpetuity and they have become unalterable and no enhancement of any kind should be introduced due to the improvements made by the landholder or by the Government. When a thing is said to be fixed unalterably, can it be taken that other conditions or circumstances would make it alterable? It is a matter of commonsense there also. In the Bill of 1895, also these provisions appeared in the Bill, as introduced, but when it went to the Select Committee they revised the whole thing. In revising it they omitted all these four clauses as put in here. They kept only two clauses. With regard to one clause, in section 16 of the revised Bill, section 9 of the Patta Regulation, was bodily introduced again. I am trying to convince those hon. Members who have

not understood the implications of an attempt to introduce these provisions at every turn. What was fixed at the time of the Permanent Settlement was considered unalterable up to 1865. As I have pointed out these rates were prevailing even after 1865. When they came to legislate in 1905, in the Bill as introduced, those lands for which rents were fixed in perpetuity were exempted, because in other cases it is a matter between parties to enter into an agreement either to increase or decrease as it is being done in the whole universe. In the Bill of 1895 as amended by the Select Committee you will find clause 16 (i) reads as follows (page 666 of the Appendices Volume):

‘In the disposal of suits involving disputes regarding rates of land revenue payable by ryots the following rules shall be observed:

- (i) In estates which have been surveyed by the British Government previous to 1 January 1859, and in which a money assessment has been fixed on the fields, such assessment is to be considered the proper land revenue payable.’

Sir, that clause would not make any material difference if we see that the rights of the zamindar remain the same as they were in sections 9 and 7 of the Patta Regulation which were enforced until 1865, but were afterwards repealed. Even after 1865 those provisions were not altered. That is with reference to one clause.

The next clause which I would like to refer is a very important one and it runs thus:

- ‘(ii) (a) The Collector shall adopt the rates of assessment in money, or of division in kind, prevailing in the cultivated lands in the year preceding the assessment of the permanent pashkash.’

Section 9 of the Patta Regulation is introduced in this clause. When it is put in there in the revised Bill of 1898, who can argue that it has disappeared, this Committee is putting it for the first time and this measure is extraordinary and expropriatory? I pointed out that so far as the Rent Act of 1865 was concerned, it was only a processual legislation which did not create rights or take away the rights. I am supported by the Hon. Mr Forbes with regard to this statement. That Act made no distinction between occupancy ryots and non-occupancy ryots. That Act made provisions for recovering the money. So it cannot be contended that the rights of the ryots had been taken away or any new rights had been created in the landholders. If that is so with regard to that piece of legislation, and if section 9 and 7 were introduced in the Bill of 1863 and they appeared in a modified form in section 11 of the Act of 1865 and again they were reproduced in the Bill of 1898 Mr Forbes said all these in 1908 when introducing his Bill—how can it be contended that these provisions have been introduced for the first time by the members of this Committee with a view to expropriate the rights of the landholders? Is there anything revolutionary? Is there any mistake in this? People could have argued in all seriousness some time before now that because the Chairman of the Committee is a Congress Minister he has brought forward an extraordinary proposal such as this. They could have also argued that the landholders could do whatever they liked and enhance the rent as they pleased. They could have used all these arguments before. But I was always certain that even the most prejudiced people and even those who might have thought so at one time would have been convinced with the material placed before them as to the justification of the present Government in introducing this Bill, when they are called upon to decide upon this plain and simple matter. I never had any trouble about it.

Now let us come to the Estates Land Act of 1908. What is the position? Was any right created in favour of the landholder or was any right taken away? I say ‘No’. Some difficulty was created in that Act by introducing two irreconcilable elements within the definition of the ‘ryots.’ There in the Rent Act, two irreconcilable elements were introduced in the definition of the ‘landholder.’

Under the Estates Land Act, there was the ryot of the 'old waste'. 'Old waste' is a land that is now in the possession of the landholder. Without attempting to establish any right to it, it was used by him for a period of ten or even more years. There were three classes of 'old wastes' at that time. All of them were entirely the property of the landholder and they were in the position of private lands of the landholder. They were his property and he could do anything he liked with them and enhance the rent if he liked with regard to those old wastes. But when the ryot had to be defined as 'old waste holder' and when occupancy right had to be given to him under the Estates Land Act of 1908, and when rules had to be framed for enhancement of rent by the landholder with regard to these lands also, as in the case of Act of 1865, they had to provide a provision reconciling the interests of the two, viz., the interests of the ryots and those of the landholder in that Act. That is how 'old waste' was included in the Act of 1908. When this mistake of including the 'old waste' was discovered at a later stage, some good members who were in the Legislature at that time thought that that provision relating to 'old waste' should not be there and they brought in a fresh Bill to remove 'old waste' from that Act altogether. When they removed 'old waste' from that Act, it was beneficial to the ryots and then the landholders clamoured that a provision should be made for enhancing the rent with reference to those 'old waste' lands.

Section 30 contains all the four clauses which I have just now read from the Bill of 1898 with regard to the enhancement of rents. All these clauses were intended to apply by the framers of the Act of 1898 only to those persons to whom they were applicable. Who were the persons to whom they applied? The holders of old waste. Section 30 says that the rent can be enhanced on account of a rise in prices, the improvements made by the landholders, the improvements made by Government and improvements which result on account of fluvial action. All these could be enforced with regard to the ryot of the old waste but not with regard to the land on which the rent was unalterably fixed. But what was unalterably fixed in 1802 is made alterable to-day by this piece of legislation. This 'old waste' was removed after having been there in the Act for a quarter of a century, but these sections 30 to 35 relating to enhancement of rent were allowed to remain on the statute book. What happens now is this: All the sections 30 to 35 which relate to the enhancement of rent and sections 40 and 41 dealing with commutation of rent and certain other presumptions under the Act will now apply to the occupancy ryots also. I am submitting that the Estates Land Act has been so misleading and has created troubles which were never dreamt of even at the time of Chokkalingam Pillai's case and Fakir Muhammad's case in 1860. Even under this Estates Land Act, I have shown that there are provisions which show that the Act did not intend to touch rents which were fixed permanently in 1802. Clause (1) of section 30 deals with the enhancement of rents on account of a rise in price. Hon. Members would not be carried away by the idea, 'Should not the landholder have the right to claim enhancement of rents when the ryot benefits on account of a rise in prices? Certainly not. If the ryot's rent had been fixed unalterably it is for him to get the benefit of a rise in prices. I want to call the attention of hon. Members to the proviso (a) to section 30 which says that enhancement of rent on account of rise in prices shall not apply to lands on which the rents had been fixed unalterably and permanently in 1802. After the Estates Land Act was passed in 1908, big landholders filed suits against the ryots in courts and obtained decrees against them for enhancing the rents at a rate not exceeding 2 annas in the rupee. How could they have done that when there was a proviso to the effect that this right to enhance rent on account of a rise in prices shall not apply to lands on which the rent had been fixed unalterably and permanently? I am submitting that even under the Estates Land Act, however misleading and misdirecting its provisions may be, the framers of the Act were not altogether unconscious of the rights of the ryots and to the extent to which they have provided this proviso to clause (i) of section 30, they have sought to safeguard them.

With regard to the other contention as to why the landholder should not claim enhancement of rent on the ground of improvements made by him I shall submit straightaway that he is not entitled to any such thing. It might look strange if it is contended that he is not entitled to any such enhancement. It might be asked, when the Government had made improvements at a considerable cost and when the ryot is reaping the benefits of the improvements, why should not the landholder who is the representative, even according to the authors of the report, of the Government for the purpose of collecting the revenue be entitled to enhance the rent? I submit, Sir, that neither the Government nor the landholder is entitled to enhance the rent on either of those two grounds, namely, on the ground of improvements made by the Government or on the ground of improvements made by the landholder. It was the duty of the Government in the first place to make improvements either by way of repairing the old existing irrigation sources or by even constructing new ones. What for does the Government take half the gross or half the net produce from the poor ryot? The Government state definitely that they want this money in order to carry on the administration and give the necessary protection to the people and to improve the works of public utility in the interests of the people. For these two reasons the Government take a share of the ryot's produce. No Government has ever repudiated these two liabilities and they hang on the Government even with regard to the ryotwari areas. When the right to collect revenue was transferred to the landholder, the liability attached to that right was also transferred to him. Therefore, on either of those two grounds, it can never be said that the landholder is entitled to claim enhancement of rents.

Then what remains? The last clause relating to fluvial action. Sir, a river is in floods and the neighbouring lands improve and they yield more. There comes the landholder. He pounces upon the ryot and asks for a portion of the increase. But why on earth should he give a portion? It is the ryot's land and his labour and God gives him something more by fluvial action. The landholder is surely not entitled to claim an enhancement of rent. Was there such a provision in the Permanent Settlement Regulation, in the Patta Regulation or in the Rent Recovery Act? Was there any such rule anywhere hitherto? It was introduced for the first time in the Rent Bill of 1898 and that Bill was dropped. In that Bill they expressly stated that this clause would not apply to lands upon which the rents were fixed in perpetuity. So this 'fluvial action' and all these four clauses were bodily included in section 30 of the Estates Land Act. I have pointed out that the proviso to clause (1) ought to have been tacked on to the end of the fourth clause stating that none of these rights to claim enhancement of rents would apply to cases in which at the time of the Permanent Settlement the rents were fixed unalterably and permanently. Instead of doing so, they did it only partially.

I shall take hon. Members to another important chapter where the matter clinches itself that it was not the intention even under the Estates Land Act to interfere with rights which have been permanently fixed at the time of the Permanent Settlement. There is a chapter on the Record of Rights and Settlements. The word 'settlement' means settling rents after getting it surveyed and getting all the things done. What was settled at the time of the Permanent Settlement was not intended to be unsettled under the Estates Land Act. Was it intended to have another settlement here and enhance the rents? Certainly not. That chapter is a very long one and there are many words which create confusion. But when they were referring to the settling of rents by the officers they were looking only to those lands which would be surveyed and with regard to which rents could be settled, even allowing for enhancement of rents on the ground of rise in prices and improvements made by the landholder and so on. The Collector was entitled to go into all these things only with regard to 'old waste' ryots and not with regard to lands for which rents had been permanently fixed.

Section 165 of the Estates Land Act which deals with the settlement of rents runs as follows:

'165. When an order is made under the last foregoing section, the particulars to be recorded shall be specified in the order and shall include, either without or in addition to other particulars, some or all of the following, namely:

- (a) the name of each ryot's landholder and of each landholder in the estate or portion thereof;
- (b) the name of the ryot or where there is no ryot the name of the occupant;
- (c) the situation extent and one or more of the boundaries of the land held by the ryot, as shown in the survey map of the village;
- (d) whether the land is irrigated, un irrigated or garden land and, if irrigated, whether double or single crop;
- (e) the rent lawfully payable at the time the record is being prepared and whether the ryot is entitled to the benefit of proviso (a) to clause (i) of section 30.'

All these things have to be done in cases in which the ryot has to pay enhanced rents. But please note clause (e).

I have already submitted that section 30 deals with the right to enhance rent on the ground of rise in prices. I have already submitted that the proviso (a) says that the section does not apply to lands for which the rents had been permanently fixed. I will read that portion of section 30 in this connection. Section 30 runs as follows:

'30. Where for any land in his holding a ryot pays a money rent, the landholder may apply to the Collector to enhance the rent on one or more of the following grounds and no others.' I want the House to remember the words, 'no others' because it is important with regard to the question of commutation of rent. The section continues:

- (i) that during the currency of the existing rent there has been a rise in the average local prices of staple food crops in the taluk or zamindari division:
- (a) PROVIDED that if the rent be permanently payable at a fixed rate or rates, it shall not be liable to be enhanced under this clause on the ground of a rise in prices.'

That is the protection given to the ryot with regard to permanently settled rates. Section 165, sub-section (e) in the settlement chapter also refers to 'the rent lawfully payable at the time the record is being prepared and whether the ryot is entitled to the benefit of proviso (a) to clause (i) of section 30.'

If that is the land on which rent has been fixed permanently, certainly even the Settlement Officer cannot touch it. It is not open to any hon. Member here or to anybody outside to contend that this rate had been abandoned, that the Government had been recognizing the increase of rate, that the Legislature has been recognizing this increase, that the landholders have been enjoying these rates without any demur from anybody until now and that vested rights are being divested now. People say that this is expropriation and the whole report is revolutionary. There is no expropriation here so far as the landholders are concerned. If there has been any expropriation, it has been the expropriation of the rights of the ryot from 1802 until now whenever the zamindars were successful in the attempts made by them. Section 30 of the Madras Estates Land Act says that enhancement of rate can be demanded only on four grounds. Section 41 of the Estates Land Act deals with commutation of rents. Was there any section relating to commutation of rents in any Act before the Estates Land Act? Is there any provision relating to commutation in the Act of 1865? Is there any provision regarding commutation in the original Regulations of 1802? Why was it introduced in the Estates Land Act of 1908? What is meant by commutation? If anybody goes and asks for commutation, the officer must go into the whole matter, take into consideration the condition of irrigation sources, find out the yield and its price and then compute. This is what

that section says. Is it not enhancement, if it is applied to lands the rents of which were fixed permanently? It is certainly enhancement. A note at the bottom of section 41 says that enhancement made on this ground need not be treated as enhancement. What is the meaning of saying that this enhancement should not be treated as enhancement, when this section was wrongly applied to lands for which rents had been permanently and unalterably, settled? Should this provision be there? Leave this matter aside.

If it had been made clear that all these provisions applied to old waste lands and not to permanently settled lands, there would have been no trouble. But dubious language has been used here. Presumptions were raised; sections were put on the statute book. Section 28 of the Estates Land Act raised a presumption to the effect that, if there is question about fair and equitable rent, the presumption is that the rate prevailing then was the proper rate. Is that the way in which the interests of the ryot should be protected, when the rents had been permanently and unalterably settled? It was the duty of the lawyers, it was the duty of the Judges who administered the laws, to have gone into the whole matter when the question came up before them and to settle the law by stating clearly that this presumption was never intended to be applied to these permanently settled lands. The question came up for consideration in connection with the Kannivadi estate where rates were enhanced on the basis of contract entered into between the land holders and the ryots. It was sought to be introduced indiscreetly in the Rent Recovery Act of 1865; even then 'contract' was done away with. One would have to tell hon. Members a few words about this curious enhancement in the case of the Kannivadi estate. One officer, Mr Hurdis, fixed the rate; it was considered very high; it was revised by another officer, Mr Peters and fixed at a lower figure. Some time after the Estates Land Act was passed, there was what was called a *manoraji* rate, both parties entering into a contract; when arriving at that rate, the rents were enhanced. The ryots raised the question and stated that this *manoraji* rate did not bind them; they said, 'our bodies might have been there, but our minds were never in the matter.' The question came up before the High Court, and one Judge stated in all seriousness that the enhancement was perfect and valid. How can it be valid and how can it be relied upon? Section 28 of the Estates Land Act says that, if there is a dispute, the presumption is in favour of the prevailing rate. It was the duty of the learned Judge to have gone into the whole matter when it came up before him. Section 135 of the Estates Land Act is a copy of section 7 of the Patta Regulation; section 136 is practically a copy of the next section in the Patta Regulation with regard to the penalty that would be levied, if there should be a violation in that respect. There should be no enhancement. Those two sections are there; inspite of these provisions, the *manoraji* rate prevailed. The Committee have dealt with that case exhaustively in the second part of their report. Although section 30 laid down that enhancement can be only on four grounds and on no other ground, the enhanced rates were recognized on the presumption basis.

I have shown you clearly how there was an enhancement of the rates when commutation took place. The question connected with commutation rates has a long history and the Committee has dealt with it in their report, and I do not wish to trouble the House by reading any portion of it. Commutation rates failed even in the ryotwari areas; commutation rates that were adopted at the time of the original settlement and subsequent settlements had failed and they have been cancelled by Majoribanks report. We are giving remission to the extent of Rs 75 lakhs even in this year of distress, when the crops have partially failed. The argument that is advanced is that, although these rates might have been fixed at the time of the Permanent Settlement, it would be difficult to arrive at the correct figures now. I may say that we have gone to the bottom of this matter; we have got material in the western districts, southern districts and in other places, to ascertain the rates. We have suggested various methods for it. It is contended that we may modify some sections here

and there in the Estates Land Act and not alter the principles of that Act. The provisions in that Act have practically destroyed the ryot. According to our findings, the Act should be materially altered. It was contended that it was only the peshkash that was permanently and unalterably settled at the time of the Permanent Settlement and not the balance. The balance is made their property; the zamindar says, 'I can do what I like with it.' That is the sort of contention that has been put forward. I may inform hon. Members in this connection that there are printed accounts prepared by the officers who submitted the Special Commission report. The basis of their calculations is also given in this Special Commission report. The accounts show the gross produce also. There is a column in that account which says that two thirds should be paid to the Government as peshkash; another column is there which shows that the balance of one-third should go to the landholder for his allowance. What more proof do the hon. Members want? How can it be contended by the Landholders' Association or by anybody that it was the peshkash that was settled permanently at that time and that the balance was given to the zamindar freely and that the zamindar can enhance the rent as he pleases? I will not be arguing on behalf of the Committee for one moment, if what the Landholders' Association says is correct. The whole report will be withdrawn straightaway.

Take, for instance, the Venkatagiri estate: the accounts were prepared by an officer called Stratton and they are printed in the report. The officer has taken the figures from the account books of the landholder himself. It is stated that so much should be paid as peshkash and that the balance should go to the landholder. The figures are taken from the books of the landholder himself; the Special Commission Settlement Officer did not get his figures from any other source. All this information is given in the Committee's report; yet the zamindar is still contending in the year 1939 in the same manner as he did in the year 1865. It is stated that the Committee's report is revolutionary; it is stated that so much sensation has been created by the findings of the Committee, the speech of the Hon. Mr Crole is in the hands of hon. Members and the reply to that speech is also in the hands of hon. Members; the reply given by the Raja of Bobbili is printed at the end of Appendices. Item by item, that is printed there. What the Raja of Bobbili said is printed in the findings of this Committee. The Raja of Bobbili reproduced what the Hon. Mr Crole stated about the right to the soil, about the rate of rent, etc.—about twenty or thirty points were culled out by him out of the speech of Mr Crole—and began to give answers to those points.

Sir, in the other House it was even contended that Mr Crole might have spoken, Mr Forbes might have spoken, they might have been persons who were very favourably inclined towards the ryots, and so forth. I had to try to convince the hon. Members there by placing before them chapter and verse and show them that what was stated by them was absolutely correct. For that purpose, I had to show to them that Mr Forbes and Mr Crole did not draw from their imagination, and we have not drawn from our imagination either. When we relied upon Mr Forbes and Mr Crole, we did not rely upon their personal opinions. Both the gentlemen referred to the authorities on which they were relying. They went back to the year 1802; they went back to what was stated before and after the Permanent Settlement, and we traced them all and have placed all those materials before hon. Members of this House; we have tried to show on what material the Permanent Settlement was based, how it was interpreted subsequently, understood and enforced. All these things have been placed in one continuous string from that date up to date. There is therefore nothing very extraordinary which we have stated.

One other point which has been urged—and perhaps may be urged here also—is with regard to the way in which these figures have been arrived at. I did not wish to take up much of the time of the House, Sir, over this matter; but I thought it was a duty cast upon me to place the material

facts before hon. Members, with a view to enable them to understand that there is nothing extravagant in the recommendations made in the report.

As regards ownership of the soil, I think, Sir, except the Raja Sahib of Mirzapuram, the other three members who have given their minutes of dissent have agreed on the point, that the ownership of the soil is in the ryot—all the three of them—Mr Narayanswami Nayudu, Mr Rangaswami Ayyangar, and Mr Mahaboob Ali Baig. I do not say that the fact that they agreed should be a conclusive proof by itself; they have agreed because the material gathered by the Committee was such that no other conclusion was possible; they have agreed on the facts recorded. And when once the ownership of the soil is admitted as belonging to the ryot, what follows with regard to irrigation sources, and to all rights and liabilities involved? If the soil belongs to the ryot, everything else belongs to him; if the irrigation sources pass through his lands, they belong to him; and the landholder was only a collection agent and never acquired any right in the soil or in anything pertaining to the land. For instance, take mines in the lands belonging to the ryots; they belong to the ryots if ownership is with them. The title of the landholder is in the *sanad*, and the *sanad* is not a document that has created an absolute freehold right both to collect rent and to the soil of the land. The *sanad* clearly makes out that the landholder was appointed as an agent to collect rent and that the agency was also made subject to conditions imposed therein. What are the conditions imposed therein? A stipulation will be found in every one of the *sanads* issued to the landholders, and that stipulation relates to the ryots and their interests also. They are made to agree there that they will carry out all the conditions contemplated under Regulation XXV of 1802 and the Patta Regulation XXX of 1802. Again, what was it that was contemplated? It is vaguely asserted that the Permanent Settlement Regulation does not say anything with regard to the ryot, that it related only to landholders and to the *peshkash*; and that therefore it could not be said that the Permanent Settlement gave any rights to the ryots. Sir, hon. Members of this House do not require much time to understand the connection between the seven Regulations which were passed on one and the same date, the 13 July 1802, and particularly, the Permanent Settlement Regulation, the Patta Regulation and Regulation XXXI with regard to *inams* or exempted lands. These should all be read together, to understand the scope of the scheme underlying the Permanent Settlement Regulations. Section 14 of the Permanent Settlement Regulation brings in the question of ryots and says that 'subject to the condition that you give them pattas defining the rent and fixing the extent, etc.' So, fixity of rent and fixity of tenure are mentioned there in Section 14. The preamble to the Permanent Settlement Regulation and the preamble to the Patta Regulation will convince anyone about the object of the Permanent Settlement Regulation and the method adopted for carrying out the Permanent Settlement. If I say a few words about the preambles of these Regulations, all the misgivings will disappear in one moment. The Permanent Settlement Regulation begins by saying: hitherto the rights, rent, *peshkash*, everything has been varying; the zamindar had no fixity of interest, or no interest either in the land or in anything else. He could not call anything his own. There is no hereditary right for him and the zamindar could be removed if he was mis-conducting with regard to collection of rent, etc. As regards the ryot, the zamindar was entitled to take any rent he pleased, without any fixity; and in the instructions to the Collectors and in the records in the State documents, it was stated expressly that the whole of the Permanent Settlement was intended primarily for the emancipation of the ryot and not for protecting the landholders with regard to payment of *peshkash* alone. So, in the preamble to the Patta Regulation it was stated that these variations, which had become intolerable, must be terminated, and so the fluctuations and variations existing till then were abolished. After abolishing them and making the slate clean, it was stated that in their place determined agreements should be substituted. What

these determined agreements are, were referred to in section 14 and again they were made clear in the sanads that were issued. They stated expressly that such and such things should be carried out.

One other matter which I did not mention in the proper place is this: some of these estates were carved out of Crown lands and they were put on auction; and among the conditions of sale, there was a stipulation that those who wanted to purchase the estates agreed to the special condition that they would take only the rents fixed for fasli 1210, i.e., the year preceding the Permanent Settlement. We have printed all these things in our report. So, the same rate applied whether it was with regard to money rent, or dry land or *punja* or house or backyard, i.e., the rates prevailing in fasli 1210 or the year 1801. It is therefore most extraordinary that people who do not know these things should now raise an agitation that startling things are contained in the recommendations contained in the report under consideration. And of all things, the most extraordinary is the position taken up by Mr Rangaswami Ayyanagar, one of the members of our Committee. I would read to hon. Members what Mr Rangaswami Ayyanagar has written. I would request hon. Members' attention to paragraph 4 at page 335 of Part I of the report. He says there:

'Coming to the question of what is a *fair and equitable rent, that is revenue*, we have seen that the zamindar who has got his peshkash fixed on the basis of the proportion and of the price level prevailing in 1802 cannot now complain if the same principle is now adopted with respect to the portion of the revenue to be retained by him. That is to say, the ryot is, in justice and equity, bound to pay not more than the share of the produce he was paying just before the Permanent Settlement computed at the then prevailing rates of prices, on a calculation of which the peshkash had been fixed. This is the recommendation of the majority of us.'

After that finding, if anything is written by the hon. Member, it will be only an alternative proposal. He has put everything in much stronger and clearer language than the other members of the Committee have done. He has illustrated it by saying 'that is to say, the ryot is, in justice and equity, bound to pay not more than the share of the produce he was paying just before the Permanent Settlement,' so that there might be no misgiving in the minds of anybody.

I am proud of Mr Rangaswami Ayyanagar. I congratulate him on the finding he has recorded. I have no complaint to make against him, because, being in the position in which the hon. Member was, he did not hesitate to record this finding. One in his position perhaps would have fought shy of it, when it was likely to affect his own interests, but he did not care for that. He recorded the finding in a much stronger language than the majority of the Committee have done. Then proceeds the alternative. I would like hon. Members to examine for a few minutes what this is: 'The mode of settling rents may be said to be correct from a purely theoretical point of view and the zamindars may not possibly raise the objection.' The other point which the hon. Member has explained for the majority also is why so much particular care was taken to keep to this Permanent Settlement rates and why the majority did not wish to go beyond the Permanent Settlement rates. As a shrewd lawyer, the hon. Member was explaining why the majority was doing this. It might be a good point for avoiding troubles at the hands of Governors, Viceroy or Secretaries of State, because in the whole of this Provincial Autonomy Constitution, some clause was put in the Instrument of Instructions to the effect that, if anybody should attempt to interfere with the Permanent Settlement arrangement, if any such attempt should be made by Provincial Autonomy—of course they would be entitled to do so—but if they should attempt to do that, we must protect the interests of the zamindars, they shall not do it without our consent, or without obtaining the consent of the Governor or the Secretary of State.' That clause is there and Mr Rangaswami Ayyanagar has come to the rescue of the majority of the Committee's findings by giving the reason why this finding is given in this manner. Otherwise, is it right to say that we would not go with the Permanent Settlement arrangement, if as I pointed out either half gross or half net produce was

given; and the zamindars have the right for half the gross or half the net? Right or wrong, we shall not touch it because they have stated that this must be done with their consent and if anything is to be done otherwise it will be subject to their supervision, otherwise they would veto it. So, we have stuck to it whatever it is. Let it be Permanent settlement, and that is what the majority have recommended. It cannot be Permanent Settlement, while you have called it or made it permanent with regard to the landholder, but allowed it to be made alterable and temporary each time the enhancement was made. What is demanded in the majority recommendations is, Permanent Settlement must be truly and honestly permanent settlement and no portion of the amount settled permanently and unalterably should be made liable to variations. That is all that is demanded with regard to this.

The Hon. Sri T. Prakasam: I should like to add a few words to what I said yesterday. I was dealing with the portion of the land revenue that was given to the landholder in return for the services which he undertook to perform in the matter of collection. I was submitting that the land revenue was fixed on the cultivated land. I submitted also the whole process that was laid down for working out the figures on the cultivated lands. It was not only one-third of the land revenue that was fixed, permanently and unalterably, that was assigned to the landholder for the collection work undertaken by him, but in addition to that he was given the right to collect rent or land revenue on the waste lands that might thereafter be brought under cultivation and appropriate the same as an additional consideration for his services without making himself liable to pay to the Government a proportionate share as peshkash. It will be seen therefore, that one-third of the land revenue plus the rent or revenue that the landlord would be collecting on uncultivated lands, which were called waste lands, as he developed them by admitting ryots on special terms, were the amounts that were allowed to the landlord. There is a little difference between the consideration of one-third of the land revenue allowed on the cultivated lands and this extra rent or revenue that he was allowed to take on the waste lands. That difference lies in this. Land being waste, the ryots would not be ready to pay as much as they pay on the cultivated lands, because they have to reclaim the land, bring it under cultivation and spend labour and money in the process. For all these reasons, it was expected that the waste lands would be given on favourable terms to the ryots. Therefore, some special provision was made at that time with regard to them. The landholder was given the right to give the land to the ryots for a small rent or revenue, and to increase it as the land developed or decrease it as it deteriorated. But a limit was put to the rent even there. The landholder was not allowed to enhance the rent as he pleased. On the contrary, he was told that the rent was fixed at the time of the Permanent Settlement on cultivated lands irreversibly and that he should not exceed that limit even in regard to the waste lands. That was the condition imposed and within that limit, he was free to enter into agreements with the persons who were admitted and to take a lower or a higher amount. It must be strictly within that amount fixed.

When this was the case, it was taken advantage of and contended in the past, even at the time of the Estates Land Act, that so far as the waste lands were concerned, the landholder was the absolute proprietor and that landlord was the landlord. May I submit to the House one word to explain the difference between the landholder and the ryot on the one hand and the landlord and the tenant on the other? They are quite different from each other. The landlord claims the ownership himself. He enters into agreement with others, who are his tenants—and the agreement is called the lease—and dictates his own terms both with regard to the amount to be paid and with regard to the period; and at the end of the term, the tenant will have to surrender it as is the case with regard to the building leases in the City of Madras. The vital difference is this: In this case the landlord claims to be the owner of the soil and at the end of the term he can take back the land and he is at liberty to increase or decrease the rent as he pleases. But in the case of the landholder and

the ryot, the relationship is distinctly the reverse of this. He has no ownership of the soil and he cannot claim the right to eject the ryot at the end of the period. The ryot holds the land in his own right and he claims the right to the soil. The only obligation imposed on him is that he should pay the land revenue that was fixed at the time of the Permanent Settlement in perpetuity. Subject to that condition he is the owner and he is the freeholder of the land that he holds. The landholder's position is that he has only the proprietary right similar to the one which the Government had and has. He has the right to revenue; he has the right to collect that amount, pay a portion of it to Government as peshkash and take the balance as consideration for his work. That is the difference.

So this right was set up at the time of the Estates Land Act Bill; and this matter was discussed by the Hon. Mr Forbes. The claim set up by the landholder with regard to the waste land as absolutely belonging to him and the right to enhance that rate was examined by the Hon. Mr Forbes. He referred to a report sent up to the Government of India on this question and the reply given by the Government of India with special reference to what had happened in Bengal on this matter. So it was declared that the landholder cannot claim a landlord's interest in the land; he cannot claim the right to enhance the rent as he pleased. He is bound by the rate fixed at the time of the Permanent Settlement; he shall not exceed that limit even with regard to waste land; he is not free to convert the waste land into his own private land by getting it cultivated by his own people at his own cost. These rules were laid down; and these are acknowledged rules.

But today the landholder is claiming right in the soil both in the cultivated land and also in the waste land. I am submitting this because there is some confusion that has arisen on account of the special rule laid down with regard to cultivation of the waste lands. Mutual agreement or an agreement for enhancing rent can be entered only with regard to waste land subject to the limit fixed there; if a waste land is given for Rs 5 per acre to-day to enable the ryot to cultivate it without much trouble and bring it under cultivation, next year if it is developed and if it yields more, he can claim a higher share of the produce. That was the facility or rather that was the option given to the landholder. This is being confused and confounded with reference to rates and rents that were permanently and unalterably fixed at the time of the Permanent Settlement. That is why I wanted to make this position clear.

The next point I wanted to refer to briefly is in connection with the right claimed by the landholder to levy higher rates on cropwar basis or on the basis of rise in prices. Yesterday, I submitted sufficiently on the question of the right to claim enhancement on the ground of rise in prices. With regard to enhancement on cropwar basis I submit it is not valid, it is not just and proper, it is not consistent with the arrangement made at the time of the Permanent Settlement. In clause 39 of the Instructions given to the Collectors it was expressly laid down that the tax levied was on the land and not on the crop and that the tax was fixed in perpetuity; the object was to give liberty to the ryot to produce enough from the land, pay the tax, then leave enough margin for protection of his family and over that to produce sufficient quantity to promote the manufacture, industry and agriculture of the country. It is because of this object, in clause 8 of the Instructions to Collectors it was stated that the whole object of the Permanent Settlement was to emancipate the ryots who were oppressed until then. Therefore, the landholder is not entitled to claim enhancement on the basis of cropwar rates. The landholder is entitled to a claim upon his ryot when he produces a crop which would leave him sufficient quantity for his own family and also for promoting the manufacture, industry and agriculture of the country. This right, I have submitted, was given as the basis in the Instructions given to the Collectors, which are printed in the Appendices. They formed practically the basis for the Permanent Settlement Regulations—Regulations XXV, XXX, XXIX, XXXI, in all seven Regulations that were passed on one and the same day of 13 July 1802. All the Regulations were based on that footing. Section 14 of the Permanent Settlement Regulation

XXV says that the rent should be defined, and provides that the amounts should be determined permanently and unalterably, the extent of the land should be specified and then that receipts should be given showing these two things in each one of the receipts. There are various other authorities contained in that Appendices volume, which I take it hon. Members have in their hands. Without taking them into the whole series of those sections I would just mention that the same rule was embodied in sections 11 and 187 of the Estates Land Act. Section 11 of the Estates Land Act runs thus:

‘A ryot may use the land in his holding in any manner which does not materially impair the value of the land or render it unfit for agricultural purposes.’

I urge the attention of hon. Members to the words ‘may use the land in his holding in any manner which does not materially impair the value of the land.’ Thus no restriction was put upon him stating that if he produces more, a share must be given to the landholder. Section 187 (1) (b) of the Estates Land Act runs thus:

‘(1) Nothing in any contract between a landholder and a ryot made before or after the passing of this Act

(b) shall take away or limit the right of a ryot to use the land as provided by section 11.’

So the tax was on the land and not on the crop or produce. If enhancement of rent either by way of a division in the crops or in cash had been levied, they are all unlawful and illegal. They cannot be quoted as constituting a custom valid and binding upon these ryots. The Latest provisions of the Estates Land Act also made the position clear. The earliest, clause 39 of the Instructions given to the Collectors also made the position clear; the Regulations themselves made it clear. But in spite of this, the zamindars had been going on enhancing rent, taking a share or compelling the ryots to pay all these things that are not valid and binding.

One other matter I would like to refer to Sir, briefly and it is this. At the time of the Permanent Settlement, what happened? A general survey was made according to the standard of measure that was then prevalent. Rents were ascertained, and prices also were fixed. The fact that the prices were fixed is clear not only from the passages of the Fifth Report, but also from Regulation XXIX of 1802. It is the Karnams’ Regulation. The Preamble of the Karnams’ Regulation is as important as the Preamble of the Patta Regulation and the Permanent Settlement Regulation of the same date. The Preamble of the Karnams’ Regulation states ‘now that everything is being fixed permanently and unalterably we do not want or require to maintain the revenue establishment in the same manner in which we have been maintaining until then’. They had been maintaining a very heavy revenue establishment, because according to the complaint of the East India Company, they were being defrauded by the landholders, who were not rendering them proper account, and the ryots were being defrauded by the landholders, because they were called upon to pay whatever was demanded, as everything was fluctuating and varying. Having passed the Permanent Settlement Regulation, they said, ‘Now that fluctuation and variation have been abolished, as we have now fixed the tenure in perpetuity, we have fixed the rent in perpetuity, we do not want so much of this revenue establishment. We shall discharge all these officers. But we would like to maintain these village *karnams*.’ Village karnam is the accountant of the village. His work is very limited now, because everything is fixed, what it should be hereafter; he has to keep a record of rights, maintain a register in which he should enter the extent of the land cultivated by each man, the yield of each year and then the prices; for prices, stipulation is made there in the Karnams’ Regulation; that he shall maintain a *monthly list*. All this was done with a view to enabling the presiding officer in the case of a dispute between a landholder and the ryot to call this karnam to produce these accounts

and find out what the rate of rent was according to his entries in the books as entered at the time in 1801 and to fix that as the proper rent. That was the direction given under section 9 of the Patta Regulation as I submitted yesterday. It only helped the presiding officer to enable him to arrive at the correct figure. The karnam was charged with that duty and he was made independent; he was not a servant of the zamindar or the ryot or even the Government; even the Collector can call him only for purposes of ascertaining the assessments that were prevailing. It was noted there that the Collector should not call the karnam to produce these accounts for other purposes and a fine was prescribed against the Collector himself, if he should abuse his power in the matter of using these accounts.

Therefore, it is clear now that the rents were fixed and records were maintained and all facilities were provided for ascertaining these whenever there was a dispute. When this was done, what was it that was fixed as the rent? That is one other point to which I am referring. Rent before that date was paid generally in kind; because, there was not sufficient coin in currency, nor even the currency notes—until 1860 the Currency Act did not come. The coins that were in vogue during the Moghul period and the Hindu period, had been changed after the English settled themselves here. Therefore, even the Government had to take land revenue in kind before 1802. In 1802 when they decided upon the Permanent Settlement, a survey was effected according to the then standard of measurement, as I stated already, and then the prices were fixed; the extent was fixed not only with regard to the money rates that had been prevailing in some areas before 1802, but also with regard to grain rents. The grain rents also were fixed not merely on taking the grain rent that was in force in the year 1801, a single year; but working out the average they arrived at the figure in the same manner in which they arrived at it with regard to the money rent. Grain rents were fixed permanently and unalterably. Money rents were fixed permanently and unalterably. In most cases money rents came in and in some places grain rents continued and most grain rents were converted into cash. Now there is at least one estate and there are some portions in other estates where this system still prevails.

The question has been raised about commutation of prices. The recommendations made by the Committee have dealt with this question, and they have arrived at the conclusion that, because the grain rent and the money rent had been fixed at the same time and on the same basis when they were made permanent and unalterable and the prices had been fixed at that time, even if the grain rent should be continuing today in some estates this commutation—because the commutation took place according to the prices registered by the karnam in 1802—should be made on the basis of the prices that prevailed in the year 1802 and not according to prices that are prevailing to-day. That is the point submitted. I am stating this so that the hon. Members who would be speaking on this, who may have had doubts in this matter may have some information on this matter. The object of fixing these grain rents permanently and unalterably was to give protection to the ryot when the question of commutation arises. It was with that object that it was settled, for there had been no price settlement at that time. We could argue that way. Sir, we shall take into account now the district of Vizagapatam. At the end of the Appendices volume we have given from the original accounts, details that could be gathered with regard to the estates in the Vizagapatam district. The Vizagapatam district, Sir, pays nearly one-fourth of the total peshkash that is paid by all the estates in the whole Presidency. About 46 lakhs or so is being paid as peshkash by the 1,659 estates in the Presidency. Out of this amount a little over 11 lakhs is paid by the estates in the Vizagapatam district alone. So far as the Vizagapatam district is concerned we have given copy of certain accounts, called the 'Goshpara' accounts, or village accounts that are available even today. They are in fact in the possession of Government officers. They are in bound volumes and the details are given; every detail is given. The zamindari village accounts were not kept separate in those days. The

same 'Goshpara' accounts dealt with the Government lands as well as the estate lands as the books were maintained then. Coming to the East Godavari district again, the next important district there are 'Goshpara' accounts bound in volumes which give all the details. Four districts, viz., Northern Circars alone pay more than half of the total peshkash which landholders, the 1,659 landholders, are paying in the whole Presidency.

Coming to the south and the west, as I submitted yesterday, we have got the accounts. I myself made the necessary efforts in this matter, because, it will be seen that in some of the minutes of dissent the question is raised, 'how can you go back to 138 years?' These materials are made available here, we have given extracts here, we have got the books here, so that there may be no difficulty with regard to the ascertaining of these rates. If there is to be any difficulty, even that difficulty can be solved by a mere rule of arithmetic, the rule of three. In every estate the land revenue was fixed permanently whether on a gross basis or on a net basis or any other proportion, it does not matter, because these are not fixed in any uniform method all over the Presidency. But the one uniform method was that out of the revenue fixed, two-thirds should be paid as peshkash to the Government and one-third should be taken by the landholder. So far as that matter is concerned it is clear from the information placed before the hon. Members of the House. When it was fixed permanently and when the whole thing was done in 1802, two-thirds of the peshkash is being paid to-day and the balance being only half of this two-thirds, making the other one-third, all that is already there. Supposing there is a village where you cannot get any book, any account at all—I am taking that extreme case—what is to be done is this. Take the village area for the whole village and the amount so levied as land revenue is clear here. The whole thing is fixed by two-thirds plus one-third; distribute it among the various people. The question will come as to why I take the extreme case as an illustration. The Settlement Officer whoever he may be, the special officer, will take that on the basis of the waste land that has to be assessed to-day and he would find out the classification of lands, because it was on the classification of the soil the whole settlement was started and that is continued even to-day. He will divide it and distribute it and the whole thing will be ascertained without any difficulty. We have given the other methods also. Therefore, Sir, it may be seen, whether it is grain rent or whether it is money rent, both were settled in the same manner, both were fixed permanently and irreversibly at the same time, so they continue together.

There is another clause in the Patta Regulation. There were four kinds of rents given in the Patta Regulation. Rent in cash, rent in grain, rent by way of division of produce and village rents, because joint village system prevailed. So far as the division of produce is concerned, in that clause, you will find that that was so intended for the lands that will be brought under cultivation after the Permanent Settlement. The language is there not for what had been brought under cultivation, but for what may be brought under cultivation. Therefore, there can be no doubt with regard to the positions that were examined by the Committee, the majority recommendations that were placed before the hon. Members of this House.

The question I submitted is a very simple one. The demand made on the landholders is not to forego one rupee out of their dues. They are asked to be just without being upset on account of this claim that is pressed on behalf of the ryots to-day. As the hon. Mr Rangaswami Ayyanagar put it so forcibly '... when you have enjoyed the peshkash at a fixed rate from then until now, how can you grudge if the ryot claims the same thing when the whole thing was settled at the same time and both should have the benefit of it.' He put it so forcibly that I adopt that and I submit that there is no expropriation, no revolution in the matter as it is complained. We are simply trying to do justice that has been denied to the man who has become an absolute wreck to-day in the country. What was the position even in 1898, when Mr Crole was speaking on behalf of these

ryots? What was the position economically so far as the agriculturists were concerned? The agricultural indebtedness in 1895 was 45 crores according to the Report of the Economic

Enquiry Committee. Today it is about 200 crores. It has increased by 150 crores. If this had been fixed permanently at that time and if the ryot had been benefited by this rule one-third of the total cultivated area to-day belongs to the landlords of those estates to that extent at least there would have been a comparative reduction so far as the debt is concerned. They have been compelled to go from door to door, borrow from morning to evening to pay their taxes. And what is the rent roll to-day and what was the rent roll at that time? If the total peshkash that is paid is 46 lakhs or 47 lakhs, what should have been the rent roll even to-day if it had continued unaltered? Forty-six plus 23; that should have been the total. Instead of being at that figure, the rent roll has come to nearly 2 crores and 20 lakhs or 25 lakhs or more than that. Where have they been getting this money to pay the landholders? The ryots have become beggars; they have become coolies in Burma, Malaya States and Indo-China. All this is given in Mr Crole's speech at the end. The whole speech that he got prepared with regard to this matter has been printed and published; it is in the hands of hon. Members. The country has been ruined practically on account of this tyranny. Therefore, there is nothing that is asked extravagantly of the landholders, Nobody can say—of course in the other House it was said—that the recommendations of this Committee have been exproprietary and confiscatory and the other House got the reply from me.

I am submitting, Sir, that the Committee had done its best to place facts, actual facts without any exaggeration. If there is any mistake—this is only the report stage—the mistake could be corrected. Such a sensation has been created over this report because 1802 has been referred to, and it is for that reason so much had to be said in the other House and so much is being said here. Therefore, I request the hon. Members of this House to exercise their judgment and reject this, if there is anything wrong, suggest modifications if there are any mistakes, or accept it if they are convinced of the barest truth that I have placed before them. What is demanded for the ryot is the simple justice that has been denied to him and is due to him. Not one farthing is demanded from out of those demands of the zamindars or landholders.

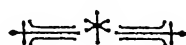
Report of the Madras Estates Land Act Enquiry Committee, 3rd February 1939. Sri T. Prakasam:

By way of closing my remarks, I wish to thank hon. Members once again. At the same time I must ask hon. Members who have taken the opposite view with regard to certain matters, to revise their opinions. Let them not attribute motives and let them not question the honest motives of the authors of the majority report. Honesty is of different kinds: there is what is called intellectual honesty. What is intellectual honesty? What is intellectual dishonesty? A comment was made once in one of the Law Journals that a Judge of the High Court was guilty of intellectual dishonesty in pronouncing a certain judgment. There was considerable trouble over it. What was meant by intellectual dishonesty? When the decision of the Judge was examined it was found that the conclusions were absurd and perverse. Judges realized that there was freedom for publicists to express their opinions. Similarly, freedom given to hon. Members of this House is rather vast. (Sri B. Narayanaswami Nayudu:—'Curtail it.') The hon. Member says 'curtail it.' It will be curtailed when the Interim Ministry comes into office again, and not by this Ministry. Honesty has been referred to side by side with communism. To show that there was no communism in the report and that it is a pure piece of justice that has been denied to millions, all these facts have been placed before hon. Members of the House. Chapters, verses and plain and simple facts have been placed before hon. Members of the House. They have to read them, to understand them and to interpret them in a just and proper manner. The hon. Member, Mr Narayanaswami Nayudu, said

'curtail the freedom'. If I had wished to do so, I would have risen and objected to the expressions used then and there. I know it will not touch anybody here. This Government is not one that will be touched by such expressions.

So, it is for the hon. Members who exceeded their limits to examine the facts and figures now and to revise their opinion and do justice to the people who have suffered. If, instead of that, there is to be an honest opinion on the facts and on the law and on the constitution, they are quite free to hold it. There are people who hold such opinions, and there are also people who grow very violent, especially when they see that there is no mistake on the other side and when the mistake is on their own side. So, I appeal to hon. Members to see that truth and justice prevail.

Then, Sir, what is this communism about? Where has the hon. Member smelt it? For what purpose has he introduced it into the debate at the last moment? During the last two or three days, the Presidential election has taken place in the Congress, and Babu Subhash Chandra Bose has succeeded and defeated his rival. (The Hon. Sri C. Rajagopalachariar: 'Leave it.') The Hon. The Prime Minister says that I should leave it. But how could that be left on the floor of this House, when an hon. Member of this House who occupied high places in the past and acted as a Governor of this Presidency for some time, gets up and mentions this word 'communism'? Where did he get it? Wherefrom did communism come? He introduced communism and attempted to show that all this is an effort now to introduce Stalin's methods here into this country. There must be some honesty with regard to this matter. I ask the Members of this House to examine these things from the beginning until now and to see whether it is not a bare rule of three that has been asked to be applied here, whether there is anything by way of one rupee addition claimed by the ryot or one rupee deduction from the amount that is due to the zamindar. If it is not so, why introduce this communism business? The hon. Member said in the course of the discussion, 'You have not done what we did during our Interim Ministry period.' I do not wish to say anything about the Interim Ministry period. Interim Ministry was a Ministry which had no Legislature to back it up; Interim Ministry wanted to anticipate the coming Government—God only knew whether that Government was coming or not. Interim Ministry appointed a Committee which made recommendations. 'Go to 1894 rates, cancel all the enhancements, all the resettlement enhancements, and then fix it permanently.' Who will fix it? If the Ministry could fix it, they would have done it before they vacated. That had to be done under an Act of the Legislature. Where was the Legislature for the Interim Ministry? To think that he should have referred to that incident and that he should have introduced communism again here, as if we would be frightened by communism! What is this communism? There can be no communism in India so long as that one man and his creed are there before the people of this country, so long as his non-violence has been accepted by Subhash Chandra Bose or by a greater extremist than Subhash Chandra Bose. Your Stalin methods cannot come, your Lenin methods cannot come here; your red cannot come here, you cannot see anything red in any of these matters. He ought not to grow eloquent over the 'communism' business at this stage of life and at this stage of constitutional developments. Constitutional developments will come and constitutional developments will go; the Government here will work and do according to their best light, without being detracted into any thing on this side or that by slogans of communism or reddism or bolshevism that may be uttered here.



15. The Bihar Assembly

Behar Herald, 2 February 1939

2 February 1939

Three bills were introduced last week in the Bihar Legislative Assembly of which two were referred to Joint Select Committees with the concurrence of the Council. These two, namely, the Bihar and Orissa Private Irrigation (Bihar Amendment) Bill, 1939 and the Bihar Minor Irrigation, Drainage, Agricultural Land Reclamation, Sanitary Improvement and Flood Alleviation Works Bill, 1939, are intended to tackle the irrigational problems of the province. The first is an amendment of an existing Act and is designed primarily to compel the landlord to repair and maintain such irrigation works as he is under obligation to maintain. For such repair and maintenance as well as for the construction of new works estimated to cost not more than Rs 5,000, the Bill empowers the Collector, on his own motion, to proceed with the work and later realise the cost from the persons benefited by such works. The second Bill is more ambitious in its scope and object and intends, as its name implies, to cover a field embracing not only agricultural but also sanitary requirements of the province as well as the requirement for combating flood menace in North Bihar. Though the procedure laid down in this Bill is more cautious and more elaborate, it follows more or less the line of the other Bill and empowers the Collector to initiate schemes either on the application of interested parties or on his own motion and having executed the scheme, to realise the cost thereof from persons whose lands are benefited by the work by instalments spread over a maximum period of ten years. To check rash action at the instance of impatient sufferers, it makes adequate provisions for the preparation of plans and estimates of any proposed work by the District Advisory Committee, the Executive Engineer, the provincial Irrigation Board and, finally, the provincial government who are made the ultimate authority to sanction or reject the scheme. The Bill, it is further to be noted, provides for the payment of compensation to persons whose property or interest may be adversely affected by the execution of any of the schemes undertaken under the provisions of this Bill. The Bills evoked little discussion and no opposition worth the name.

The third Bill, namely, the Bihar and Orissa Municipal (Bihar Amendment) Bill, 1939, however, proved a veritable 'apple of discord'. Drafted, as stated in the Statement of Objects and Reasons, further to democratize the Municipalities in the province, it provides for the abolition of the system of nomination, substitution thereof by a system of co-option on the principle of co-opting an adequate number of members of the scheduled castes, introduction of the principle of reservation of seats for the Muslim community through joint electorates on population basis, and finally penalisation by the Government of such municipal commissioners as may be guilty of misconduct in discharge of his duties or default in payment of his rates and taxes for more than one year. The Bill evoked opposition from Muslim members who, with one exception, demanded separate electorates in addition to reservation of seats on population basis. Members of scheduled classes, in a body, demanded reservation of classes for Harijans on population basis and strongly protested against the proposal for the abolition of the system of nomination. Quite unexpectedly, the measure was opposed by two out of the three lady members of the Congress party (the third member was absent on the day) who put in a strong plea for the reservation of seats for women. This, however, drew forth a spirited protest from Mr Ram Charitra Sinha (Congress) who uttered a stern warning to the women of the province not to poke their nose into "these affairs" and pointed them to their "proper place" at home in the right royal fashion of Herr Hitler. The Bill, however, was circulated

for eliciting public opinion thereon on the motion of the Hon'ble Mr Anugrah Narayan Sinha,¹ Minister in charge of Local Self-Government.

¹ Anugraha Narayan Sinha (1887-1957); educated at Patna College and Calcutta University; gave up legal practice in response to Gandhi's call whom he first met in Champaran in 1917; actively associated with the Congress movement since 1912 when he served as a volunteer during the Congress session at Patna; minister of finance, PWD, labour, commerce and local self-government in the first Congress ministry, and minister of finance in 1946, a portfolio he held until his death.

16. On the Congress Ministers: Linlithgow to Zetland, 7 February 1939

Zetland Papers, Acc. No. 1971, NAI

[Extracts]

...You mention in paragraph 4 of your letter the attitude of the Congress Ministers. I quite agree that things in Assam seem to be going well. I will take an opportunity to ask Reid¹ to let me have, as you suggest, his views on the relative merits of the present government and its predecessor. In Bombay, again, I should have said that your judgment of the situation was entirely correct, though Desai² (while I found him pleasant to deal with) clearly can, on occasion, make himself a nuisance, and is undoubtedly vindictive in his attitude towards the service of which he was once an undistinguished member. There is no question, in my judgment, of the high level (compared with some other Ministries) of general culture of the Bombay Cabinet. Again, though my personal impressions are now a year old, I should have thought that Erskine³ had a fair team and Rajagopalachariar, apart from some occasional outbursts of petulance, is of exceptionally high quality. The Prime Minister of Orissa has cooperated as well as the Congress High Command has allowed—he is entirely subservient to it—over recent troubles, but we are both familiar with the course of past relations between Hubback⁴ and his Cabinet. I do not think one could describe it as having been too happy and I cannot help feeling that a very major part of the responsibility for that state of things rests on the Ministers themselves. In the case of the Central Provinces, Wylie's⁵ admirable letters and the excellent reports which Hyde Gowan⁶ used to send, suggest that his Ministers cannot be too easy a team and must impose a very heavy burden on the Governor, nor would one judge them to be of any particular merit. Things clearly go very smoothly in the exceptional conditions of the North-West Frontier Province. That leaves us with the United Provinces and Bihar. Personal relation between Haig and his Ministers, and indeed between the civil servants who have to work with those Ministers and their masters, are, I would judge, fairly friendly...

While they (Ministers) may not be outstanding in points of personality or character, there is, I think no doubt that UP team contains a number of men of high intelligence and of some public experience. Hallett's⁷ team I would judge to be a weak one, though the Finance Minister, whom I have only met for a couple of minutes, is highly spoken of. It seems fairly clear that in Bihar again there are stresses and strains from time to time in relations between the Ministers and the services (to a very much lesser extent indeed between Ministers and the Governor) but I would not have judged the Bihar team to be a strong one...

¹ Robert Niel Reid (b. 1883) entered the ICS in 1906; was first posted in Bengal where he rose to become the Chief Secretary in 1932-4. He was Governor of Assam from 1937 to 1942.

² Morarji Ranchhodji Desai (b. 1896); educated in his home town Bulsar and Wilson College, Bombay; joined the provincial civil service in 1918, but resigned his deputy-collectorship in 1930 to join the civil disobedience movement; Secretary of the Gujarat PCC (1931-37, 1939-46) and AICC member since 1931; chief minister of Bombay (1952-56)

before joining the central government as minister of commerce; after the withdrawal of the emergency in 1977, he headed the Janata government.

¹ Erskine (1895–1953); educated at Eton, Christ Church, Oxford; Conservative member of Parliament (1922–34, 1940–1), Governor of Madras from 1934 to 1940.

² John Austun Hubback (b. 1878); entered ICS 1902; Magistrate and Collector, Bengal, 1909; Secretary, government of Bihar and Orissa, Revenue Department 1919; member, governor's executive council, Bihar and Orissa, 1933; governor, Orissa 1936–41.

³ Francis Wylie (b. 1891); educated at Dublin University; joined ICS in 1914; assistant commissioner, Punjab. Served in Indian Army reserve of officers, 1916–19; held various appointments in the Foreign and political departments, 1919–37, assumed charge as governor of CP and Berar, 1938.

⁴ Hyde Gowan (1878–1938); graduated from New College, Oxford; entered ICS in 1902; under-secretary, CP government 1904–8; financial secretary, 1918–21, 1925–6; chief secretary, 1927–32; governor, CP 1933–38.

⁵ Maurice Garnier Hallet (1883–1963); educated in Winchester and New College, Oxford; joined the ICS in 1907; served in Bengal as assistant magistrate and collector; secretary to the government of India in the Home department; governor of Bihar from 1937 to 1939, and UP from 1939 to 1945.

17. The Sind Ministry: My Cabinet Will Follow Congress Programme—Allah Bakhsh

Tribune, 6 February 1939

It is reliably understood that Mr Bandeh Ali Khan, a former Minister in the Hidayatullah Cabinet, has been selected by Khan Bahadur Allah Bakhsh, the present Premier of Sind, in furtherance of his decision to enlarge the Cabinet.

The Premier of Sind, who arrived in Bombay today by plane had a long interview with Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel,¹ Chairman of the Congress Parliamentary Sub-Committee² and discussions, it is understood, centred round questions relating to the policy and programme of the Ministry.

One more Minister, it is learnt, will be selected soon after the Premier's return to Karachi from among the Hindu party. Thus the Sind Cabinet will have a strength of five. The rumour that Sir Ghulam Hussain Hidayatullah might also be included in the extended Cabinet is discounted.

In an interview Khan Bahadur Allah Bakhsh said that the purpose of adding two more Ministers to his Cabinet was to facilitate the work of the Ministry which, with only three members at present, was finding it difficult to cope with the work. He added that his Cabinet would follow the Congress programme and the various measures to be undertaken for the uplift of the masses would be on the lines of the Congress Provinces.

The question of introducing prohibition in Sind was engaging the serious attention of the Cabinet and the report of a prohibition committee appointed sometime back to go into the question was now under consideration. Financially Sind was not an independent province in the sense that other provinces are, but if the Cabinet found additional sources of revenue to replenish the loss due to prohibition, they would go full steam ahead. For the present the Cabinet had a proposal for placing restrictions on the sale of intoxicant drugs. It was proposed to place a premium on the use of intoxicant drugs by persons below the age of 19 from this year. The age would be raised to 20 in 1940, to 21 in 1941 and so on thus eradicating the drug evil by stages.

One of the main items of his ministry, he added, was in the field of cottage industries. The Government has already opened two emporiums where village industries products were exhibited and popularized. Legislative measures for debt conciliation and for relieving rural indebtedness, on the lines of those undertaken in the Congress provinces were also receiving the attention of the Sind Ministry. A special officer had been appointed to go into the question of tenancy legislation and submit a report to the Government.

Referring to education Khan Bahadur Allah Bakhsh said that the Ministry was examining the Wardha scheme of Education¹ and final decisions would be arrived at shortly.

The question of the assessment of the barrage lands had been settled but there were likely to be some changes when the final orders are to be passed.

¹ Vallabhbhai Jhaverbhai Patel (1875–1950) guided and controlled the activities of the Congress ministries as chairman of the Congress Parliamentary Board Sub-Committee. The Viceroy noted in the summer of 1938 that the Sardar was 'a figure of growing importance'. In addition to being the chairman of the CPB, he held direct charge of parliamentary affairs in Bombay, Madras, Sind and the Central Provinces.

² Besides Patel, other members of the Committee were Rajendra Prasad and Maulana Abul Kalam Azad.

³ An educational conference held at Wardha in October 1937 decided to provide free and compulsory education for seven years on a nation-wide scale, introduce the mother-tongue as the medium of instruction and re-organise the process of education around some form of manual and productive work. This scheme, authored by Jamia Millia Islamia's vice-chancellor, Zakir Hussain, was adopted by the Haripura Congress in February 1938.

18. National Flag and *Vande Mataram*

Behar Herald, 14 February 1939

14 February 1939

Mr Mohiuddin Ahmad brought a motion in the Bihar Assembly on the 6th instant to adjourn the House to discuss the situation created by the singing of Bande Mataram and the hoisting of tri-colour flag by the Hindu boys in the Jahanabad school, and asked whether it was right for the government to force the anthem of one section on another. A lively discussion followed in which Mr Ram Charitra Sinha, Mr Yunus¹ and Mr Zafar Imam took part. In reply Dr Mahmud² deploring the mentality of a selection of Indians said that the national flag belonged to all sections of Indians and it presented the culture of all sections, and Muslims themselves had made substantial contribution to Indian culture. Two major symbols of the Congress in its fight for freedom were the tri-coloured flag and the Bande Mataram song. But unfortunately persistent and determined efforts were made either to put down both or to exalt the glory of both. The Bande Mataram song had associations for which it acquired a special national significance and was sung with courage and enthusiasm at all national gatherings inspite of the great dangers that attended its singing. However, he made himself clear by telling the House that the government had never any desire to insist upon the hoisting of national flag over the building of any educational institution or to force a student to take part in the singing of Bande Mataram against his wish. They have only removed the former ban on these two as politically objectionable.

¹ Mohammad Yunus (1884–1952); educated in Patna and England; called to the Bar in 1909; attended the Congress session in 1906; elected to the Imperial legislative council (1916) and the Bihar and Orissa council (1921); as leader of the Muslim independent party formed a ministry in Bihar and was first Premier of the province under the Act of 1935; founded and edited *Patna Times*.

² Syed Mahmud (1889–1971); educated at Aligarh, London, Cambridge and Germany. Started practice as a Barrister at Patna, 1913; non-cooperated at the call of Mahatma Gandhi, 1921; General Secretary, Khilafat Movement, 1921–26; elected General Secretary, Indian National Congress, 1923 and again from 1929–36; member, Congress Working Committee, 1940–45; was imprisoned four times; Education and Development Minister, Bihar, 1937–39; started mass literacy movement in Bihar in 1937 and successfully worked it. Publications: *Khilafat and England*; *A Plan of Provincial Reconstruction*, *Hindu-Muslim Cultural Accord* and several others.



19. On the Congress Ministry in Orissa and NWFP

'Heading For a Crisis', Editorial, *Tribune*, 17 February 1939

While we hope with all our heart that a crisis will yet be averted in the only manner in which it can be averted—by timely action on the part of the responsible authorities—the latest news from two of the Congress-governed provinces shows quite clearly that things are drifting towards a crisis in those provinces. In Orissa while some time ago the hope was expressed of a possible settlement of the differences which were reported to be existing between the Governor and his ministers on the question of the Orissa States, the present indications are that no such settlement is in sight.¹ The *Associated Press* understands from influential circles that 'the Orissa ministry are pleading for good government in the States which are their neighbours', it being their considered opinion that 'after good government is assured it would be a matter for the rulers and their subjects to settle amongst themselves the question of responsible government'. If this is, indeed, the position of the Orissa ministry, as there is every reason to believe that it is, it is impossible to deny that their demand is as modest as it is eminently reasonable. The Mahatma stated the truth with perfect accuracy when he said in a recent article in *Harijan* that 'the ministers in Orissa may not sit comfortably in their chairs, if they do not succeed in sending the 26,000 refugees to Talcher, their home, with an absolute assurance of safety and freedom of speech, and social and political intercourse'.²

All the three things to which the Mahatma referred are among the essentials of good government, and the Orissa ministry would, in our opinion, be perfectly justified demanding that they should be ensured to the 26,000 refugees and, indeed, to the people of the States generally. In doing so they would be doing no more than what the British Government itself has always claimed the right to do even in the bigger States, though it has not, as a matter of fact, exercised this right either in a consistent or a satisfactory manner. Has it not repeatedly declared it to be its right to interfere in the affairs of the States in cases of serious misrule? And what misrule can be more serious than that in which these elementary rights of the subject are denied to the people of a State? If the Princes demand protection from the Paramount Power, and it is quite clear that many of them especially the smaller ones among them, cannot exist for a day without such protection, it is clearly the duty no less than the right of the Paramount Power to tell them that they must treat their people as all civilized Governments treat their people and must concede to them their ordinary civil rights and liberties. The Congress which is not only in alliance with the British Government but its legitimate successor in eight of the provinces, is fully entitled to tell the British Government that it should withhold its protection from any ruler who is not prepared to pay this indispensable price for that valued commodity. It is perfectly clear that this attitude on their part has nothing to do with the demand for responsible Government in the States. Good government, here as elsewhere, is no substitute for self-government, which it is essentially for the people of the States themselves to fight for a win, however much their neighbours in the provinces may sympathise with them in their fight.

In the Frontier province the position is both simpler and more serious. Here the Congress ministry and its supporters are asking not for good government in any State within their geographical boundaries, but, for good government in their own territory, in the districts for the administration of which they are themselves responsible. Happenings like the Bannu raid³ and the more recent Dera Ismail Khan riot⁴ are matters which directly concern them, and both the Congress and the country have a right to demand that unless the Congress Ministers are able to take all necessary steps both to prevent a recurrence of such happenings and to mete out exemplary punishment to those responsible for those happenings they should cease to have anything to do with the administration. It is not only absurd but wholly intolerable that the actual power of the

administration, the power effectively to prevent crimes and punish criminals should belong to one set of men and the responsibility for the administration to the Legislature and the people should belong to another. In the Frontier Province according to no less an authority than the accredited leader of the Congress Party this is the position today. More than once he had declared in the clearest terms that the failure of the Congress Ministry to deal effectively with the wave of lawlessness and crime is due to their not obtaining from subordinate officials the loyal cooperation and support to which they are entitled and without which no ministry can ever do its work properly or adequately. One would have thought that the author of this serious declaration would have been summoned by the Governor⁵ immediately, so that he might place before His Excellency the data on which his statement was based. Unhappily nothing of the kind was done for months. It was only a few days ago that Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan received an invitation to meet the Governor, and the actual meeting took place on Wednesday. What transpired at the meeting is only imperfectly known at the time of writing, but we learn from our Peshawar correspondent that one of the subjects discussed was the crime wave which was passing over the province and the prevailing general insecurity, and that Khan Sahib expressed his belief that 'if the officials at the top extended complete cooperation to the Congress Government, officers of the subordinate services would follow suit as a matter of course'.

We do not know what effect the talk that the Congress leader had with the Governor is going to produce on the attitude of either the higher officials or the subordinate officials, but one thing is quite clear. Things cannot indefinitely remain where they are. In the opinion of many competent critics they have remained in that most regrettable position for too long a time already. There may be things enough to be said for the view attributed to Maulana Abul Kalam Azad⁶ that the ministry should not immediately resign, but neither he nor any other responsible in the Congress ministry can be following a policy of drift in so vital a matter. Indeed the spokesman of the D.I. Khan minority communities' deputation that recently waited upon him at Peshawar told a press representative that 'the Maulana was very seriously considering the question of raids and kidnappings in all its aspects' and that he had hinted to the deputation that 'the Congress would, if occasion demanded create a deadlock on this issue'. The Maulana has, indeed, already appointed a committee to inquire into the recent D.I. Khan riot, which resulted in the death of 11 persons and serious injuries to several others.

We do not know the terms of reference of this committee. We hope they are sufficiently wide to cover all the vital issues involved. But speaking frankly the question does not seem to us to be one merely of making an inquiry into one specific incident, however important in itself. The happenings at Bannu and D.I. Khan are symptomatic of a condition of things which is general, and which is not likely to improve unless those who have any responsibility for the administration show a resolute determination not to tolerate it for a day longer. That the Congress ministry is anxious to improve the present conditions we have no doubt whatever, but for one reason or another the determination to take the necessary drastic steps has hitherto been wanting. It is here that a change is imperatively called for, and for this reason we welcome the assurance given by Maulana Azad in his speech at a public meeting at Peshawar that 'the Congress took a serious view of the alarming happenings in the province and that if it failed in its endeavour to improve matters it would adopt some other course'.⁷ In our opinion the limit of public patience in this matter has very nearly been reached. The Congress ministry will in the near future have to make up its mind finally as to whether it can stay with honour or should go.

¹ The Orissa Province with six districts came into being on 1 April 1936. In the newly-created legislative assembly the Congress won a majority of seats—36 out of the 60 seats. But the Congress in the province, as elsewhere, did not

form its ministry owing to differences over the discretionary power of the provincial governors. Following a compromise reached in July 1937, a Congress government, headed by Biswanath Das, replaced the three-month old interim ministry.

² *Harijan*, 28 January 1939, in the *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. 68, p. 348; also, *Harijan*, 4 February 1939.

³ Over 200 raiders forced open the city gates and indulged in arson and looting. They met with no resistance from the police.

⁴ Hindu-Muslim riots broke out in Dera Ismail Khan. Gandhi sent a telegram on 8 February from Wardha to Dr Khan Saheb enquiring 'Are you doing anything effective about Dera riots'?

⁵ George Cunningham (1888–1963) spent much of his career in the ICS serving in the North-West Frontier region. He was appointed governor of the province in 1937, a position he held until 1948.

⁶ Maulana Abul Kalam Azad (1888–1958) is better known as the 'nationalist Muslim' who spearheaded the Congress movement among his co-religionists and opposed the demand for India's Partition. Much less is known about his important organizational work in the Congress, especially during 1937–39 when the ministries were formed in different provinces. He acted as a mediator between the Congress High Command and its provincial units and settled inter-party feuds, as in Sind and the North-West Frontier Province.

⁷ On 20 February 1939. See below, 'The NWFP Ministry: Abul Kalam Azad's Warning', 20 February 1939.

20. Frontier Affairs

Editorial, *Tribune*, 18 February 1939

18 February 1939

The last few days have seen keen political activity in the Frontier province. First, the visit of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad has been utilised for discussions not only in Congress circles but also elsewhere. Secondly, the interview of Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan with the Governor has also led to speculation and discussion. Maulana Azad had received deputations not only from Congressmen but also from the Hindus of Dera Ismail Khan whose lot during the last few years has not been happy. It is not that the Frontier Government is not interested in their welfare or that the sad happenings in the shape of kidnappings and dacoities are viewed by them with indifference. But it will not be denied that, whatever the reasons, the Frontier Government has failed to bring security to people in certain parts of the province. For this Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan has blamed the officials. He has openly accused them of ignoring the orders of the Government. This is a very serious charge, and we do not remember to have seen any repudiation of the charge either by the Governor or any other competent authority. Nor has the Ministry ever claimed that it is getting all the cooperation that it needs from its officials. If it is, indeed the case that there are officers in the Frontier Province, who deliberately defy the orders of the King's Government in the province, they are guilty of a very serious offence and it is the duty of the Government to take a serious view of their conduct. It will not be conducive to the progress of the province if officers can with impunity defy the orders of a Government that is responsible for the administration of the province. It is open to the Frontier Government to resign, but it is also the duty of the Governor to insist that the orders of his Government are implicitly carried out. The Governor, recently, gave evidence of political wisdom in calling "Frontier Gandhi" for consultation. His Excellency should now give a further proof of his political acumen by compelling the officers to obey his Government.

21. The NWFP Ministry: Abul Kalam Azad's Warning

Editorial, *Bombay Chronicle*, 20 February 1939

20 February 1939

It would be better for all concerned if the authorities, that is to say, the Governor of the Frontier Province and the Government of India, gave serious attention to the statement issued by Maulana Abul Kalam Azad on the conclusion of his visit to the Province. For a long time the Province has

been suffering from an unending series of dacoities, riots and raids. The Maulana in his very cogent statement analyses the situation and puts the issue clearly when he asks 'Why this sudden upheaval of lawlessness as soon as the Congress Ministry came into power? Certainly no sane person can believe that the Congress Ministry is not trying its utmost to suppress all lawlessness and deeds of violence, but why in spite of all these efforts is crime persisting?' The root of the answer is to be found in the peculiarly anomalous conditions under which the province is governed. As Maulana Abul Kalam Azad points out, 'Being a Frontier Province, it has an administrative system, which is directly under the control of the Central Government. The Provincial Government has no control over it... In a word this is an area where a different administration of the Central Government is run parallel to the Provincial Government'.

Now, it is common knowledge that the Congress Ministry has been complaining of persistent abstention by the bureaucracy from offering its full and loyal cooperation to the Government and its refusal to reconcile itself to the changed circumstances. This is a fact and it is mainly due to the anomalous circumstances of the Province. The duality of authority—even though the spheres of activities may be different—under which the officials live and work tends to induce irresponsibility and encourage the desire to ignore the Congress Cabinet towards which they naturally did not feel any sympathy. The situation, therefore, has become impossible, so much so that Maulana Abul Kalam has been compelled to use strong language which is not his wont. It cannot be allowed to persist and the Maulana has quite rightly uttered a definite warning about it. We hope that this warning will be carefully heeded by the Governor and the Government of India—we purposely ignore the officials who are after all mere agents—otherwise it is they who will be responsible for a grave crisis which will inevitably be precipitated.

22. Sind Ministerial Politics

Editorial, *Tribune*, 22 February 1939

22 February 1939

A perplexing situation has arisen in the Ministerial politics in Sind. Failing to secure the support of the Congress Party, the Premier, K.B. Allah Bakhsh, has been trying to consolidate his position by expanding his Ministry. Only a few days ago, he added two new Ministers—one Hindu and one Muslim—to his Cabinet.¹ He decided to appoint another Muslim Minister, Ghulam Hussain Hidayatullah, ex-Premier and at one time leader of the Opposition. But it seems an influential section of the Ministerial Party did not favour the idea of having Ghulam Hussain as Minister. It threatened to withdraw its support from the Government if the Premier insisted on appointing him a member of his Cabinet. That was the reason why Ghulam Hussain was not sworn in on Monday last, even though he had gone to Government House for the purpose. For the time being the oath-taking ceremony has been postponed for two days. But whether Ghulam Hussain will actually become a member of the Government depends upon further developments. If K.B. Allah Bakhsh finds that he will be weakening the position of his Ministry by appointing Ghulam Hussain as Minister he will very probably decide not to have the sixth Minister. It is impossible not to sympathise with the Sind Premier in the difficulties he is experiencing. His is a popular Ministry in the real sense of the term. It is carrying on the Congress policy and programme without being asked to do so. Such a Ministry deserves well of everybody. But as ill-luck would have it, in spite of all its efforts, it has not been able fully to stabilize its position. It cannot, indeed, be denied that the present difficulties of the Ministry are due to the bungling of the Congress, which has hitherto refused to extend the hand of fellowship to it. If the Congress had not adopted an unreasonable

attitude towards the Ministry, K.B. Allah Bakhsh would not have felt the need of expanding his Cabinet. Even now it is not too late. The Congress High Command and the Congress Assembly Party should reconsider their attitude and decide to support the Ministry which is a Congress Ministry for all practical purposes. If the Congress could favour the formation of a coalition Ministry in Assam at a time when that Ministry was not fully sure of its majority, with what justification can it withhold support from a Ministry which is nationalist to the core of its being? If K.B. Allah Bakhsh is assured of Congress support he will certainly give up the idea of wooing those who have hitherto been opposed to his Ministry.

¹ Djalma Doulatram and Dundeh Ali Khan of Talpur.

23. Unionist Government and Communal Tangle in Punjab

Article by Prof. Gulshan Rai, *Tribune*, 25 February 1939

25 February 1939

The Unionist Government as their very name suggests should promote communal unity and harmony in the province. That is what they profess their programme is. But unless the majority wins the confidence of the minorities, there can be no unity and harmony. When the Unionist Government came to power in April 1937, the Unionist leader told the people of this province that the programme of his Government would be to lighten the burdens of the peasantry, tackle the problem of unemployment, develop and expand nation-building activities of the State, create a more favourable atmosphere for the promotion of communal unity and good-will and protect scrupulously the legitimate interests of all communities. Now this programme is neither more or less than the constructive programme of the Indian National Congress. I have been for more than a year supporting Sh. Sikander Hyat and his Government. I did it, even at the risk of being misunderstood by my own community, because I felt and believed that the Unionist Government were following substantially a national programme. I have begun to adopt a critical attitude because I feel that the Unionist Government have begun to depart from the policy they were following in the first year of their office. I do not agree with those people who say that they must support a Congress Government, whatever it may do or omit to do, and oppose the Government of any other party even though it may be scrupulously following the programme of the Congress. I believe such a spirit is a factious spirit, it is bound to rouse the worst passions, and it must result in disunion, communal conflicts, and class struggles.

One of my critics writes, 'It is one of Professor Gulshan Rai's pet arguments that Sir Sikander Hyat Khan like his predecessor in Punjab politics, the late Mian Sir Fazl-i-Husain started as a Nationalist, but later became like him a communalist or something equally worse'.

I plead guilty to these charges. I do assert that when the late Mian Sir Fazl-i-Husain first assumed office as Minister in the Punjab Government, we knew him as one of the Presidents of the Punjab provincial Congress Conferences. But in order to rally all the Muslims in the Council under his banner, he found it necessary within a year to pander to the communalism of his Muslim followers. Again when Sir Sikander Hyat assumed office in April 1937, he was known as a person who was opposed to the communalistic policy of Sh. Fazl-i-Husain. Take for example his attitude towards the question of communal representation in local and legislative bodies. He was supposed to be in favour of joint electorates with reservation of seats. He was expected to follow a policy which aimed at communal harmony and inter-class cooperation. Taking this to be his policy some

of us supported him. But can it be said that he was preserved in that policy? Within a year he accepted the lead of Mr Jinnah whom even his predecessor in the Punjab politics had repudiated.

Take the agrarian legislation. Is it only the moneylenders and the *Arhtias* (stockists) who are up against the Unionist Government? Had only these two classes condemned the Government, I would not have blamed the Unionist Government. I belong to a caste, which does not indulge in lending money. Members of my caste are as much the victims of money-lenders as are the Jats and the Rajputs. I can have no sympathy for money-lenders as a class. Again I belong to a caste which does not engage in shop-keeping. I cannot therefore be over-sensitive with regard to the grievances of shop-keepers and the *Arhtias*. It was therefore natural for me, on general principles of equity and fairness, to support indebtedness legislation, and the law to regulate markets. Many of my Hindu friends misunderstood me, and Hindu communal leaders imputed all sorts of unworthy motives to me.

Why do I criticize adversely their measures in the form in which they have been passed through the Assembly? Mian Ahmadyar Khan Daultana¹ says: 'The criticism which Professor Gulshan Rai and others are leveling against the Unionist Government in the Punjab, is exactly of the same kind as is being leveled by the spokesmen of Talukdars in the United Provinces against the Congress Government there'. Mian Daultana has given a wrong example. If tenancy legislation of the nature introduced by the Congress Government in the United Provinces, had been introduced by the Unionist Government in the Punjab Assembly, I can assure him that the Government of which he is an honoured member would have received full support from the Congress benches and from other Hindus and Sikhs in the province. Will Mian Daulatana induce Sir Sunder Singh Majithia² to introduce into the Punjab Assembly a tenancy legislation of the same nature as is being pushed forward in the UP Assembly? If the Unionist Government agree to do it, they will at once go up in my estimation, and I will begin to sing songs in their praises. Will they do it? I believe not.

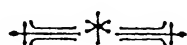
The fire-eating landlords, who form an overwhelming majority among the followers of Sir Sikander Hyat Khan, will never permit the introduction of such a legislation in the Punjab Assembly. And yet by a legislation of that kind alone the burdens of the peasantry can be lightened. The agricultural labourer and the tenant is the person who really works and toils. The rent-receiving landlord is after all a parasite. The Unionist Government have so far done nothing for the benefit of the tenants and the agriculturist labourers. It is these people who are the most backward and the most depressed. What has during the last two years been done for them? The Unionist Government take credit for making large remissions in land revenue and water rates. These measures give relief more to the rent-receiving landlords than to the tenants and agricultural labourers. Had the Unionist Government ordered that total remissions be granted to smaller landlords possessing less than 15 acres or had they brought in legislation to reduce rents payable by the tenants to the landlords, or had they proposed the stoppage of arbitrary ejectments of tenants-at-will by the landlords and granted to the former more security of tenure, they would have certainly lightened the burdens of the peasantry. But so far they have done nothing of the kind. The indebtedness legislation, which has raised so much controversy, is after all a palliative. It may give relief by way of virtually wiping off the existing debt; but it helps in no way to improve the economic condition of the peasantry. So long as their economic condition is not improved and additional sources of income are not found for them, they will always run into debts. Even before this legislation was carried through, the debts were unrealizable. If they have now been practically wiped off by law, that makes no real difference. Where was the sense then in rousing bitter opposition in order to obtain at best very doubtful advantage?

If legislation of this nature had been piloted in cooperation with and the support of the moneyed classes, the debtor classes would have lost nothing. If in pushing through this legislation unfair discrimination had not been made in favour of the castes and tribes notified under the Land Alienation Act, and all money-lenders, whether belonging to the notified agricultural tribes or not, had been put on exactly the same level, and alienations of agricultural land whether made before or after the 8 June 1901, had been treated exactly alike, the Unionist Government would not have lost the allies they have now lost. If in pushing through the law for the regulation of markets, the Unionist Government had confined themselves only to the removal of the abuses and not laid down sound principles governing the relations between the producers, the distributors and the consumers, and not seized the opportunity of establishing bureaucratic control over these market committees, by introducing the principle of nomination in the composition of these committees, they would have secured the support of all fair-minded people. But it seems the Unionist Government intoxicated by the comfortable majority they have at the moment in the Assembly, and egged on by fire eaters in their own camp, have thrown all ideas of justice and fairness to the winds, and have appeared in the role of the protectors of class interests. I am not advocating the cause of the money-lenders and the Arhtias. But I do hold that all classes including these two should get equal treatment, and that no discrimination, economic, social, or political, should be made against any class, whatever it may be. I do not want the supremacy of any class over the others. What the Unionist Government is trying to do is to secure the political supremacy of the notified agricultural tribes over those who are not notified. Even among the Notified agricultural tribes they are trying to secure to the bigger landlords, owning more than 20 to 30 acres, political supremacy over their less fortunate brethren. This is the old Prussian Junkerism of Bismarkian type. Such a policy must be combated by all true nationalists.

Let me make myself clear. I support the policy of expropriating the rich for the benefit of the poor. Let that be done by all means. But in doing this let there be no discrimination in favour of the capitalist zamindars and against capitalist traders, merchants and factory owners. It is this latter thing that the Unionist Government have failed to avoid. On the contrary there is a general feeling in the country, that they have deliberately been trying to exalt unduly the notified tribes by fair means and foul. This spirit of discrimination runs through all the different legislative measures that the Unionist Government has pushed through during the last eight months. The result is that instead of promoting unity and harmony among all classes of the population they have brought about a regular class war in the province. One of the most important items in the programme of the Unionist Government has thus disappeared from the list. They have falsified the hopes that were raised about them. Do they propose to win back the confidence of those whom they have disappointed?

¹ Mian Ahmed Yar Khan Daultana (1896-1940) was one of the premier landlords of western Punjab and a founder member of the Unionist Party. In politics he followed in the footsteps of Fazl-i-Husain and Sikander Hyat Khan, but gradually gravitated towards the Muslim League. His son Mian Mumtaz Daultana (b.1916) also shifted his allegiance to the Muslim League in 1943, becoming its general secretary a year later.

² Sardar Sunder Singh Majithia (1872-1941) was secretary of the 'Chief Khalsa Diwan', President of the Sikh Educational Conference, member of the Viceroy's executive council (1919), president of the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee (1920), leader of the National Progressive Party and held the Revenue portfolio in the first autonomous cabinet in Punjab. He was a loyalist and received several honours from the British government.



24. An Indiscreet Statement: Jawaharlal Nehru to
C. Rajagopalachari, 17 March 1939

SWJN, Vol. 9, pp. 323–24

Many letters have come to me drawing my attention to a certain speech delivered by Varkey,¹ Minister for Education in your government, at Tinnevely on 6th March.

I have read this report with astonishment. Varkey has every right to express his opinion against communism or socialism, but as a Congress Minister he has no business to carry on a propaganda against the declared policy of the Congress. The Congress has repeatedly expressed itself in regard to the conflict in Spain² and, in doing so, has condemned the rebels under General Franco³ and sent its good wishes to the Spanish Republic. Varkey is reported to have said that General Franco stood for religion, order, and democracy and was against the communists who have done such harm in that country. Varkey has every right to hold the opinions he likes in regard to religion, though it does seem strange to me that General Franco should try to protect religion with the help of Moorish Muslims and German and Italian troops. It is stranger still that General Franco's conception of order should consist of the horrible bombings of civilian populations, undefended cities and helpless refugees.

As for democracy, I have not yet come across any person accusing General Franco of being democratic. Perhaps Varkey's ideas of democracy differ entirely from those usually held. I wonder if Varkey is aware that a very large number of Catholics have opposed General Franco and the Basque country,⁴ which is ardently Catholic, fought bitterly against him. Further, that a vast number of people in other countries, who are neither communists nor socialists, have condemned General Franco and his methods.

But I need not discuss the merits of General Franco. There are plenty of books and other materials for any person to judge. What I am concerned with is with Varkey's defiance of the Congress resolutions in regard to Spain. The Tripuri Congress has reaffirmed these resolutions. It is astonishing that a Minister of a Congress Government should openly go against the Congress policy. If he feels that it is his duty to preach crusades against the Congress resolutions and policy, then his place is outside the Congress Ministries. It will be highly unbecoming for a controversy of this character to be carried on in public between Varkey and Congressmen. And yet it is obviously not possible to remain quiet when Congress Ministries indulge in these fantasies. I am sending a copy of this letter to Varkey directly. I shall wait for your⁵ and his reply before making any statement of mine, on the subject.

¹ C.J. Varkey (b. 1891); educated at Maharaja's College, Ernakulam and St. Joseph's College, Trichinopoly; professor of history and political science, member, Madras University syndicate; minister of education in Madras government.

² In its Tripuri session on 10–12 March 1939, the Indian National Congress expressed its entire disapproval of British Foreign Policy culminating in the recognition of the Spanish government. Jawaharlal Nehru, in a interview on 23 June 1938, stated that Gandhi and the Congress were in favour of Republican Spain. For text of the interview, see *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, Vol. 9, pp. 25–26.

³ General Franco (1892–1975); Spanish soldier and dictator; commissioned in Army, 1910; chief of Army General Staff, 1935; joined insurgents in Spanish Civil War, July 1936; named head of rebel nationalist government and Generalissimo of its forces, October 1936; kept Spain neutral during World War II.

⁴ The Basque country is a region in northern Spain, consisting of the Basque provinces. The Basque Provinces were seeking independence and continued separatist agitation. In 1937, Franco's Nationalist troops overran the Basque region, which in hope of ultimate independence, supported the republicans.

⁵ The reply of Rajagopalachari was that the minister was 'a little too fond of the exercise of the talent for expression', and that he could not 'be classified along with the very wise. People take his utterances to a large extent less than seriously'. He added: 'It is a little difficult for us to deal with Ministers belonging to minority communities who are supposed to be very helpful, but too often lead us to think that it would be easier to deal with rank communalists'.

25. The UP Ministry: Haig to Linlithgow, 25 March 1939

Haig Papers, Microfilm Roll No. 1, NMML

When I last wrote, my Ministers were at Tripuri. One might have supposed that with Pant playing such an important and apparently successful part there they would have returned in good heart and pleased with themselves. They returned, it is true, to meet some very damaging criticisms of their budget, and this would have served rapidly to batter them out of any undue complacency. But I certainly saw no sign among my Ministers of any elation on their return. I was myself disposed to discount a good deal of the press propaganda representing Tripuri as a great victory for the right wing. It seemed to me that the real lesson of Tripuri was that there were profound differences within the Congress, that the left wing are a formidable opposition, and that on the whole the left are much more ready to face a split in the Congress than are the right. Consequently they seem to have the advantage of the initiative. This is merely speculation on my part and based on my own reflection on the published facts. But what does seem indisputable is that the Congress direction is at the moment in a state of paralysis, and I do not think the right wing can be feeling very happy about the position. I was greatly interested in what you told me in your letter of 19th March of your impressions of Gandhi in your conversations, and also in what you said about the outcome of Tripuri and the unexpected determination that Bose has shown.

2. Certainly Pant appears to me depressed and somewhat overwhelmed by his problems. The Ministry created the impression on my mind of suffering from a lack of clear thought and decision. It is possibly a combination of the uncertainty of the Congress situation, the extreme hostility between the Hindus and Muslims which has resulted in riots in many places and brings discredit to the Ministry, and finally the effective and outspoken criticism on the Employments Tax and the finances of the Province, to which they have become very sensitive. Pant is perhaps ceasing to believe in himself, and on that account cannot bear to be told that he is wrong.

3. As I have indicated above, I think that the Ministry have definitely lost ground over the budget debates. Srivastava's criticisms of the Employments Tax were particularly galling, and I am told that when he enlarged on the point that the tax would accentuate unemployment, he obviously had the attention and the keen interest of the Congress members in the Assembly. I think myself that the Ministry committed a very serious political blunder in proposing this tax; and whatever the outcome of it, they will have frightened and irritated the middle classes and to a large extent forfeited the goodwill of the Services. Katju¹ seems to have been unwise enough recently in one of the debates to take credit for having cut the pay of the Services by his own powers without the necessity of going as a suppliant to the Secretary of State. This might be an important point if it comes later to a question of refusing assent. This is what the 'Statesman' reports him as having said: 'Has not public opinion always considered that the public services of this country are highly paid and that salaries should be cut? If the Bill brings about a reduction in their salary, it is an additional merit. I refuse to go to the Secretary of State in supplication and ask him to consider a salary cut when I can act on our own authority. I am looking forward to the day when all the public servants will owe allegiance to us and not to a *ma bap* Secretary of State. If by this Bill a method has been devised to bring about the wholesome result of a cut in the salaries we should receive congratulation'. Another point on which the Ministers have been heavily attacked is that their policy seems to imply an endless vista of new taxation, and this I think will do them a good deal of harm. The point will no doubt be strongly elaborated at the projected demonstration to protest against excessive taxation which I believe is to take place in Lucknow towards the end of the month.

4. The Hindu-Muslim situation continues to be very unsatisfactory, though there has been no further major out-break since Benares, and Benares itself has quietened down. It is clear from reports which have now come in that the assistance of the available company of British troops on the first day of the rioting at Benares was invaluable and that without them it might have been very difficult to bring the situation under control. With the end of the Muharram Holi period, the likelihood of actual outbreaks is of course much diminished, but both in Cawnpore and Benares feelings are still strained. In many places in the province rioting was narrowly averted, and much credit is due to the district authorities for their firm and impartial attitude. There were some peculiar outbreaks in the district of Budaun where communal tension had for some time been very acute. In several villages in succession Hindu crowds appear to have assembled and attacked Muhammadan houses. The situation had distinct potentialities of danger, but vigorous action was taken and I hope we shall hear no more of such developments. In one village the police had to open fire and four Hindus were killed. We have not yet had a very clear account of the facts. But these incidents illustrate a state of feeling between the two communities which, as I have said before, seems to me much more acute than I have ever known it.

5. The Premier is naturally much disturbed about these conditions, but he shows no signs of being prepared to relax the domination of his party or take any measures that would really create better feeling between the communities. I cannot help feeling that though he repeats the most admirable maxims on nationalist principles and complete impartiality, he cannot in fact escape altogether from the instincts of a Hindu. And there is no doubt that the Hindus must bear their full share of the blame for the present feeling. There have been clear indications lately of their aggressive mood. There is some reason to think that when Pant went recently to Delhi to see Gandhi he discussed with him the communal situation. Anyhow he seems to have returned with some very impractical Gandhian views. I have just seen unofficially some notes which he has prepared for the consideration of his colleagues. He had made some not very unreasonable practical suggestions about official investigations into the handling of the recent riots and the methods by which we could take more effective measures to check these outbreaks at the beginning, or deal with the situation afterwards. One can always learn lessons from experience, and I have no doubt it is wise to review the facts carefully by official machinery and without publicity. But he has also written a very strange note which I think must owe its inspiration direct to Gandhi. He suggests that we should give up the attempt to regulate observances, processions, music, cow-slaughter, etc., that we should abandon the old practice of relying on custom and let every one have the widest freedom to exercise their legal rights. Apparently the idea is that when, for instance, processions are not regulated by outside authority, they will regulate themselves and avoid all clashes. Hindus will show a spirit of consideration about playing music before mosques, and Muslims will not exercise their right of cow sacrifice in a provocative way. It is difficult to understand how any one who knows the actual conditions can really put forward such ideas seriously. They are on a par with Gandhi's advice in yesterday's paper to Mr Chamberlain to solve the present international situation by exhorting all the powers simultaneously to disarm. Another suggestion is that as communal electorates in local bodies accentuate communal differences, an active policy should be pursued of substituting joint electorates, subject to some such arrangement as was approved for the Scheduled Castes. It does not seem to me that this is likely at the moment to exercise a very tranquilising effect on Muslim opinion. Another idea is to spend a lot of money on propaganda for communal concord. But propaganda not based on facts and a new spirit will be useless. Propaganda will not create the new spirit. I doubt whether these ideas after scrutiny by the other Ministers will reach me in these rather naïve Gandhian forms. But it seems to me to illustrate the point that the Premier is in a state in which he has no clear and sane views of policy, and I am

beginning to lose a good deal of my confidence in his political judgment. It has been suggested to me that at the moment he is suffering from lack of guidance which he used to receive from the Congress higher command. That was not my own impression. I was inclined to think that though he conformed scrupulously to certain general principles of policy laid down by the Working Committee, he was very much disposed to take his own line on the ordinary problems of provincial administration. My own feeling rather is that as he sees the difficulties around him continually increasing, his own judgment becomes less steady than it used to be, and he may be led into doing foolish things.

6. Another embarrassment of the Government is the perennial question of the Madhe Sahaba in Lucknow.² This has again come to a head recently and the Sunnis are engaged in a Civil Disobedience movement against the order of the District Magistrate forbidding them to recite Madhe Sahaba during the Muharram and Chehlum period. As the Government in effect promised last November to give the Sunnis a fairly early opportunity of reciting the Madhe Sahaba they are now being accused of a breach of faith in not taking the necessary steps, and the civil disobedience movement has met with a surprising degree of support. Yesterday it appears there were over 500 arrests in Lucknow. The local authorities have been anxious for some time to get some clear line of policy out of the Government. At my suggestion the Cabinet considered the matter a few days ago and we were all agreed that in the circumstances it was advisable to announce that shortly after the present prohibition under Section 144 expires after the Chehlums, an opportunity will be given to the Sunnis to take out a procession and recite their Madhe Sahaba in public. It will bring the matter to a head. It may even lead to a riot. On the other hand it might conceivably lead to a settlement. It is really not possible to allow the present situation to continue indefinitely. Some suspicions have been expressed that the Congress have been encouraging this Madhe Sahaba movement with a view to splitting the Muslims. The grounds for these suspicions are that Maulvi Husain Ahmad Madni who is the prime mover in the present Madhe Sahaba agitation is a very prominent Congressman. But it seemed to me clear from my discussion with my Ministers that they look upon his activities as a grave embarrassment to themselves, and I am confident that they have done nothing to encourage him.

7. The Maharajanj tahsil in Gorakhpur is giving trouble again. The reason is simply that the Premier will not face up to his troublesome follower, Mr Shibban Lal Saxena.³ Record operations have been in progress for many months and have had a settling effect. But Shibban Lal does not want a settlement. He lives by agitation, and recently he seems to have been using his volunteers for the purpose of interfering with the record operations and he justifies what he has been doing by making reckless charges of corruption against the assistant record officers who are Provincial Service men of good status supervised by a very capable young Indian ICS officer. Some weeks ago the Collector considered that things had reached such a point that it was necessary in order to protect the staff from intimidation and unable to work to go on, to take action under Section 144 against Shibban Lal's activities. He asked permission from the Ministry. As usual in such cases, he got no reply; but Shibban Lal was sent for to Lucknow, and confronted with the ICS record officer. I understand that Shibban Lal was reduced to silence. Nevertheless, the Ministry proposed to send down a Parliamentary Secretary to make some vague inquiry, ostensibly into the action of the Congress workers, but indirectly into conditions connected with the record operations. This seemed to be undesirable that the Ministers have now been persuaded for the time being to drop the ideas of sending the Parliamentary Secretary. I am proposing to take up the whole matter with the Premier as soon as possible; but at the moment he is so overwhelmed with work and in such an uncertain mood, besides not being very well, that I do not think I could get anything satisfactory out of him.

8. We have been having several Cabinet meetings lately, which are a heavy addition to the work of Ministers after attending the Assembly from 11 am to 6.30 pm. One of the matters discussed was the Bill to withdraw the original jurisdiction of the Oudh Chief Court. Dr Katju has been for a long time a strong advocate of this, and the Ministers at one time committed themselves formally to the principle before they had even asked the Chief Court for their opinion. Since then Dr Katju has shown himself impatient of such criticisms and felt bound to offer, and also of any delay. When the matter came up in Cabinet, however, it was discussed on a very restrained note. The Bill was approved, and then Dr Katju said that he assumed it should now be published. His colleagues however were unanimous that there was no occasion for this and it was decided that the Bill should be introduced later when the Hon'ble Minister thought it was convenient. It was quite obvious that the feeling of the Ministers was that they had quite enough opposition on their hands at the moment and did not want to provoke more. The Bill will be strongly resisted, I think, by most of the Oudh interests. Another point of considerable interest was the decision about the Chief Court vacation. The Court at present have a two month's vacation under orders issued every year by the local Government. This compares with two and a half months taken by the Allahabad High Court. Dr Katju has been expressing very strong views about the excessive period of these vacations, and he had put into the Bill a definite provision to the effect that the vacation in the case of the Chief Court should not exceed six weeks. I had assumed that this like his other proposals would be accepted by his colleagues. But as the discussion proceeded it became evident that they had no wish to introduce this matter into the Bill. It was decided that the length of the vacation should continue to be regulated by executive order, and the clause in the Bill was omitted. With regard to the vacation for this year, it was finally decided that it should be allowed to remain at two months and should not be cut down to six weeks, the question of reducing it in the future to be left for consideration later. The lead in this direction was given by Kidwai, the only Oudh representative in the Cabinet, and it was clear that there was a feeling among the Ministers that they did not wish to ruffle Oudh feeling unnecessarily.

9. We have also issued a Bill for reducing the existing debts of cultivators and small landlords. The Bill contained some fairly drastic provisions some of which were severely criticised by the Revenue Secretary. A good many amendments were made in the principles of the Bill in consequence of this criticism, but the main provisions have been accepted and it was said that they resemble closely a measure which has already been passed in Madras. They hope to introduce this Bill in April. We shall shortly have to consider the action to be taken about the stayed arrears of rent. The Ministers I understand have quite made up their minds that these should be written off completely. This will of course be much more drastic action than is being taken on the ordinary civil debts of cultivators in the Bill I have just mentioned, and I shall not fail to point out to the Ministers the objections in principle to what they intend to do. But they are absolutely committed to this policy. It will involve legislation and they will again be very strongly opposed and criticised by the landlords. Altogether they are being driven into one measure after another which exposes them to very justifiable attack, and the time has passed when in the first flush of their victory they could brush aside and disregard all attacks upon them...

¹ Kailash Nath Katju (1887–1968) was a Kashmiri Brahmin who settled in Allahabad after his graduation from the Foreman College, Allahabad. He was a distinguished lawyer, acting as the principal defence counsel in the Meerut Conspiracy case. After independence, he held several important positions in the UP, Madhya Pradesh and the central government.

² *Madh-e-Sahaba* refers to the recitation of the Sunni praise in memory of the four orthodox Caliphs (Abu Bakr, Umar, Usman and Ali). The Shias, on the other hand, insisted on their right to *Tabarra*, i.e. condemnation of the three

Caliphs, who were supposed to have usurped the rightful claims of his family. Both, accompanied by the playing of martial music, were performed publicly, and resulted frequently in Shia-Sunni fracas, notably in Lucknow.

Shibban Lal Saxena (1907-85); educated at Dehra Dun, Saharanpur, Kanpur and Allahabad; served as a professor of Mathematics and Philosophy at St. Andrews College, Gorakhpur, in 1930-31; political activities started in April 1919, at the age of twelve, when he was arrested for organising a hartal at Kanpur under the leadership of Ganesh Shanker Vidyarthi; took part in the non-cooperation movement in 1921; worked as a volunteer during the Kanpur session of the Indian National Congress in December 1925, and became the secretary of the UP Youth League (1928); took part in the civil disobedience movement, was arrested on 27 December 1931; served as the Secretary of the Harijan Sewak Sangh till 1936 and did commendable work amongst the peasants of Maharajganj; arrested in September 1940 for resisting ejectments of peasants and was released in June 1942; took an active part in the Quit India (1942) movement in eastern U.P., arrested and prosecuted as the chief organizer in the 'Gorakhpur Conspiracy Case' and awarded ten years' imprisonment; released in May 1946.

26. The Cabinet Crisis in Bengal

Editorial, *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 23 April 1939

26 March 1939

The Huq¹ Cabinet has lost control over the steering wheel. In several matters, and the Calcutta Municipal Bill² and the Bengal Moneylenders Bill may be cited in this connection, the Government proposals, bad as they are, have been made worse by the Coalition or Ministerial Party. In their desire to placate the party, from which comings and goings have been many, and rumours of defection have been even more frequent, the Ministers, at least the Muslims among them, have surrendered their own judgments and agreed to proposals, the absurd or disastrous nature of which they could not but be aware of. This has made the Ministers the targets of furious attacks from the Opposition, and the Ministers in repelling those attacks have progressively lost control over the hot-heads of their own party. The bitterness between the Government and the Opposition has gone on increasing, and today the position is such that constitutional Government has been becoming, if it has not already become, impossible. We have only to compare and contrast the British Ministerial party cum His Majesty's 'loyal' Opposition and the corresponding parties in the Parliaments of Bengal and the Punjab to be convinced how far our Provincial Autonomy has departed from the principles of constitutional Government. In the British Parliament the Ministerialists and the Opposition have many points of difference, but there is always an undercurrent of the spirit of cooperation the go-by to the principle of nationalism associated with the honoured name of Surendranath Banerjea,³ the author of the present Calcutta Municipal Act. The Hindu majority in the city of Calcutta is proposed to be reduced to a minority.

Another matter in regard to which, according to report, there has been a Ministerial crisis, relates to certain provisions in the Money-Lenders' Bill. This Bill also rests on the inspiration of communalism though communalism here is not so obstreperously obvious as in the case of the Calcutta Municipal Bill. The European members of the Assembly are said to have strongly objected to the inclusion of Banks and insurance Companies within the sphere of the Bill with which the Ministers have agreed. Of course, there are other Joint Stock Companies, the Loan Companies for instance, that have been proposed to be brought under the operation of the Money-Lenders' Bill, but since Europeans have no concern with these indigenous institutions the Ministers do not feel any qualms of conscience in regard to them.

The Muslim Ministers always pretend that they are the representatives of the poor, the Krishaks and Prajas. What, however, is their record of service for the latter? In the debate in the Assembly in connection with the demand for grant for the Debt Settlement Boards, some of the members from rural Bengal and one particularly of the Scheduled Caste, gave facts and figures which went to show that the policy of the so-called Debt Settlement has resulted in more misery for the cultivating

class, the *bona fide* agriculturists. The Hon'ble Minister stated that in Bengal 3,412 Boards had been created, and he gave figures of debts settled by them. He did not say what portion of the total amount of debt settled was of genuine agriculturists, and what of the malafide agriculturists, planters, Hon'ble Ministers, professional men, Zamindars, etc. He seemed to be oblivious of the fact that even before the Debt Settlement Boards were created, creditors were amicably settling their claims, and if statistics were taken of debt thus settled, it would come to a figure no less striking than that cited by the Minister.

But apart from the destruction of rural credit caused by the Boards, the policy of the Ministry has rendered the poor cultivators even more miserable than they were. 'Unless provision is made,' rightly said Mr Syamaprosad Burman (Independent Scheduled Caste), in his speech 'for rural credit by the establishment of Banks in rural areas, by the mere establishment of Boards agriculturists would derive no benefit'. Mr Burman has personal experience of the situation in the rural areas and he has, like many before him, exposed the hollowness of the pretension of the Ministry that they have conferred great benefit on the poor cultivators by paralyzing the civil courts. As we pointed out the other day the cultivators are making out and out sale of their lands to get indispensable funds whereas formerly they had not to resort to this desperate means to secure loans.

¹ Fazlul Haq (1873-1962); educated in Calcutta University; joined government service as a deputy-registrar, 1906; resigned and joined the Bar in 1912; entered Bengal legislative council, 1913; secretary, Bengal Presidency Muslim League, 1913-16, and from 1916-21 President of the All-India Muslim League; took a leading part in Congress-League negotiations, 1916; resigned from the Congress after acceptance of non-cooperation resolution; minister of education in Bengal government, 1924, represented Muslims at the Round Table Conference, 1930-32; founded the Krishak Praja Party in 1927; mayor of Calcutta, 1935-36; chief minister of Bengal, 1 April 1937-38 to March 1943.

² See 'The Calcutta Municipal Amendment Bill', 22 May-29 June.

³ Surendranath Banerjee (1848-1925); founder, Indian Association, 1876, proprietor, *Bengalee*, 1878; editor, 1877; member Bengal legislative council, 1893-1901; President, Indian National Congress, 1895, 1902; played a leading part in the agitation against the partition of Bengal in 1905 and the swadeshi and boycott movements which followed; left Congress in 1918 following differences over the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms; minister in Bengal government, 1921-23; defeated in the elections to the Bengal legislative council, 1923

27. The Sind Ministry

Editorial, *Tribune*, 1 April 1939

1 April 1939

The long advertised and much-talked-of motion of no-confidence in the Sind Ministry was moved by Dr Hemandas in the Sind Legislative Assembly on Thursday.¹ The debate was not finished on that day, but the speeches made in the debate and the numerical position of the respective parties made it clear that whether the motion was accepted or rejected the majority would be extremely narrow. The Opposition, according to the mover, were 28 in a House of 60, which meant that if only it succeeded in getting three more members on its side it would be able to pull down the Ministry. In view of the extremely tense atmosphere in the province and within the Legislature itself it would be no matter for surprise if the Opposition did succeed in getting this accession of strength, just as it would be no matter for surprise if it lost a few of its supporters, as it did lose one during the first day's debate, when the only Muslim member of the Congress Party sprang a surprise upon the House by speaking against the no-confidence motion.

For our part, strongly as we have from the first advocated a coalition between Allah Bakhsh Ministry and the Congress on terms mutually advantageous to both, our present concern is not so much about the fate of the Allah Bakhsh Ministry as about what will take place if the Opposition

succeeds in turning it out. The Allah Bakhsh Ministry, in spite of its heterogeneous composition, has had some sort of a common programme. What programme can the three Opposition parties claim to have among them? The strength of the three parties is said to be 10 Congressmen, 8 Muslim Leaguers and 11 Hindu Independents. If the Opposition succeeds in carrying their motion of no-confidence, whom is the Governor to invite to form the next ministry? The three parties together have no common leader. The 11 Hindu Independents, who constitute the largest group in the Opposition are, as their very name signifies, lacking in the cohesive force that is of the essence of a homogeneous party. The 10 Congressmen, who constitute the second largest group, cannot possibly be expected to accept the responsibility of office on the strength of the precarious support of the Muslim Leaguers and the Hindu Independents, on neither of which groups can they possibly count with any confidence. Besides anything like a common policy or programme between the Congress and the Muslim League Party is, in the present conditions, a hopeless impossibility. The Muslim League Party itself is not only the smallest of the Opposition groups, but is obviously not in a position to form a ministry. Where, then, are the elements of a stable ministry to be found in Sind at the present moment if the Allah Bakhsh Ministry goes?

If ever there was a case where it was far easier to break than to make a ministry, that case is here. For months now the ministry in Sind has been leading a precarious existence. It was absurd to bring against it the charge that one of its critics brought against it during the debate, that the ministry had achieved nothing. It would have been nothing short of a miracle if it had. No ministry, even if it consisted of the best, the strongest and the wisest men in the province, could have achieved much in the conditions through which the Ministry has been passing all these months. And the worst part of the thing is that any ministry that succeeds the Allah Bakhsh Ministry will find itself in much the same position.

A stable ministry in Sind seems to us to be an impossibility unless and until there is a change for the better in the party alignment in the province. A coalition government is the only form of government possible in Sind today, and a successful coalition necessarily presupposes the existence of a larger measure of agreement than of difference among two or more groups, and secondly the combined strength of those groups giving the government a substantial, if not a comfortable, majority. Neither of these conditions seems to be satisfied in Sind today.

¹ The no confidence was moved on 30 March 1939 by one Hemandas, a former minister in the Hidayatullah Cabinet, in protest against the handling of the satyagraha movement against the *Om Mandals*. The motion was, however, withdrawn the next day following an agreement between the ministers and the members of the Hindu Independent Party

28. Bengal Moneylenders Bill

Indian Annual Register, 1939, Vol. 1, pp. 156, 161-65

3-4 April, 1939

3rd and 4th April: The Hon. Nawab Musharaff Hossain moved that the Bengal Money-lenders Bill, as reported by the Select Committee, be taken into consideration. The Bill, as it emerged from the Select Committee, was given a mixed reception on the floor of the House. Mr D.P. Khaitan, representative of the Indian Chamber of Commerce, said that when the Bill had been originally introduced by the Government, it was like a useful horse and when it emerged from the Select Committee, it was like a ferocious tiger. According to Mr Khaitan, the Select Committee had changed the fundamental character of the measure. Opposing the motion for consideration, Mr W.C. Wordsworth, on behalf of the European Group, urged that the Bill should be recommitted

to the Select Committee. He maintained that the measure would give a deathblow to cooperative credit in Bengal. Mr Abdul Bari (Ministerialist Party) supported the motion for consideration and said that the Bill would go a long way in affording protection to the agriculturists hard oppressed by money-lenders and capitalists. Next day, the 4th April, the Hon'ble Speaker, Mr Azizul Huq, gave his ruling, regarding the question raised by Mr D.P. Khaitan, to the effect that the provincial legislature was not competent to legislate in relation to banks, corporations or promissory notes and therefore some of the provisions of the Bengal Money Lenders Bill were beyond the powers of any provincial legislatures. The Speaker held that this Assembly was fully competent to legislate on money-lending and money-lenders. The Speaker added that his remarks were only about the general aspects of the bill and there were probably some provisions in the bill which looked as if the House was trenching into regions where it had no right to go. But this might be discussed at a later stage when the specific issues would be taken into consideration. After the Speaker's ruling, the amendment moved, on behalf of the European Group, by Mr Curtis Miller for recommitting the Bill to a Select Committee was lost without a division. The amendment was supported by the Independent Nationalist Party. The amendments standing in the name of several members of the Congress Party were not moved. Mr Whitehead (European Group), supporting the amendment, moved on behalf of his party for recommitting the Bill to a Select Committee, criticised the recommendations of the Select Committee for including 'promissory notes', 'banks' and 'trading corporations.' The Speaker contended that the Bill would give a death-blow to cooperative credit in Bengal. After Mr Suhrawardy, Labour Minister, had spoken, Nawab Musharaff Hossain explained the various provisions of the Bill and asked the European Group to withdraw their amendment. The Chief Minister, Mr A.K. Fazlul Huq assured the European Group that their view-points would receive due consideration at the hands of the Government. He also assured members belonging to other parties, that the Government would carefully consider their view-points also as reflected in the large number of amendments tabled by them. He told the House that although the Government in consultation with the Coalition Party (supporters of the Government) had brought forward this Bill in response to the popular demand for protecting the poor peasants and agriculturists against the excessive rates of interest charged by money-lenders, they were quite prepared to consider the view-points of every section of the House. Although the Coalition Party were in a majority in the House, they were not unmindful of their responsibility towards the minorities in the House. The House agreed to take the Bill into consideration. The amendment of the European Group was lost without a division. The House then adjourned.

26th May to 2nd June: The House then resumed the discussion of the Bengal Money-lenders Bill. The House made a considerable progress with regard to Clause 2 of the Bill which dealt with definition of capital, interest, loan etc. A large number of amendments were moved by the Opposition members but all of them were lost. The House accepted amendments of Mr Suhrawardy with regard to the definition of Company, cooperative Societies, Insurance Company, and Cooperative Life Insurance Society. Mr Surendra Nath Biswas (Congress) moved the following amendment 'That a widow or a fatherless minor whose total advances in loans do not exceed the sum of Rs 500 is not a money-lender'. On the assurance of Mr Suhrawardy that he would sympathetically consider the motion further discussion was postponed. The House stood adjourned till Monday next, the 29th May, when it disposed of seven clauses. According to the provisions agreed to by the House, a person will have to take out a licence from the Government on payment of Rs 15 as fee for each licence. Consideration of the controversial question whether commercial loans should be brought within the purview of the Bill or not, was postponed to a later date on the suggestion of the Government. The House then adjourned till the next day, the 30th May, when by 86 votes to 17, it accepted the Government amendment excusing commercial loans from the

purview of the Bill. The Congress party and three members of the Coalition Party remained neutral. Those who voted against the amendment included the members of the Krishak Proja Party and the Independent Scheduled Caste Party. On the next day, the 1st June, the House made a considerable progress when it disposed of clauses 15 to 24 relating to the court's power to cancel a licence, no compensation for cancellation or suspension of licence, disqualification of a person whose licence has been suspended or cancelled, licence fees and penalties recoverable as public demands and offences in respect of licences. The House discussed fully two important clauses, namely clauses 20 to 21, and arrived at no conclusion. On the next day, the 2nd June, the question of the language in which a money-lender will be required to keep his books of account was decided. After discussion, the hon. Mr H.S. Suhrawardy's amendment providing that a money-lender could keep his books of account in Bengali or in English was carried by 99 to 62 votes, the Congress and the Krishak party opposing the amendment. Dr Nalinakshya Sanyal's (Congress) amendment urging that a money-lender should be permitted to keep his books of account in any language he liked was lost without a division. Mr Suhrawardy's amendment suggesting that the statement of the conditions of the loan at the time of advance and annual statement of accounts to be submitted by the lender to the borrower, might be written either in Bengali or in English as the borrower might desire, was passed. A Congress Party amendment that such statements should be in the language of the borrower was rejected. The House then adjourned till June 15 next.

15th to 27th June:—The Assembly reassembled on the 15th June to resume consideration of the Bengal Money-lenders' Bill and adjourned till the next day, after a brief sitting, as the Government wanted time to arrive at a decision in regard to a clause relating to interest. Next day, the 16th June, it disposed of some more amendments with regard to Clauses 31, 32 and 33. Progress was not however satisfactory as the Government could not come to any decision with respect to certain amendments to these clauses moved by the opposition. The House then adjourned till Tuesday next, the 20th June, when by an amendment moved by Mr H.S. Suhrawardy, a provision was made regarding the unsecured loan for annual instalments for possible extension of time for 20 years and decree without interest was to apply only to unsecured loans before the commencement of the Act so that future loan might be given without a danger of having the realisation held up, for a period of years. Another provision was made which provided that in case there was any failure to pay the instalments the court might give time for the payment of the instalments which should not be less than one year, if the court found that the failure had been due to circumstances beyond the control of the debtor and that it was necessary that the debtor should be given time to collect the money till the harvest. The House was then considering the question of penalties to be inflicted if the loan which had been described as commercial was found to be not commercial loan. Mr Suhrawardy said that the Government had made this provision very stringent. They did not want the law to be evaded. The House was considering this when it was adjourned. On the 22nd June, a vital part of the Bill, namely clause 28, laying down that the rate of interest should not exceed 8 to 10 per cent annum simple, in the case of secured and unsecured loans respectively, giving the rate of interest so proposed retrospective effect and extending the 'Rule of Damdupat' to apply to interest already paid or included in any decree, came up for consideration. The Government did not move any amendment to the clause of the Bill, as reported by the Select Committee. As many as 19 amendments were, however, moved to the Clause by members belonging to the Congress Party, the Krishak Proja Party, the European Group. The amendments moved by Congress members wanted to lay down a lower rate of interest both in respect of secured and unsecured loans than that provided in the Bill. The amendments moved by the Krishak Proja Party members wanted to lower the rate of interest still further. The amendments moved by Mr D.P. Khaitan (Independent), representing the Indian Chamber of Commerce, wanted

to give a rate of interest higher than that proposed in the bill, opposed the application of the 'Rule of Damdupat' to past transactions, desired to make provision for payment of compound interest which has been altogether abolished by the Bill and urged restriction of the provisions of the Bill regarding the rate of interest and application of the 'Rule of Damdupat' to future transactions only. The amendment moved on behalf of the European Group opposed the giving of retrospective effect to the provision of the Bill regarding the rate of interest. The amendment moved by Mr J.N. Basu (Hindu Nationalist Party) desired to make provisions for compound interest. The debate on these amendments, which lasted nearly three hours and in which about a dozen speakers representing different parties took part, was adjourned till the next day, the 23rd June, when all non-official amendments demanding lower rates of interest than 8 to 10 per cent annum simple for secured and unsecured loans respectively as proposed in the Bill and opposing the application of the rule of 'damdupat' and retrospective effect to the proposed rate of interest and urging the levy of compound interest were rejected by the House. In opposing the amendments, the hon. Mr H.S. Suhrawardy, Labour Minister, told the European group, which had opposed retrospective legislation, that the Government realised that retrospective effect given to law was bad in principle and that the Government were justified in this case because, the conditions of the people in this Province were such that without retrospective application, there was no possible hope of saving the people from the clutches of the money-lenders. The House then adjourned till Monday, the 26th June, when it finished consideration of all amendments to all the clauses of the Bill. The most important clause which was discussed today and which evoked controversial discussions empowers the court to reopen all transactions in connection with money-lending unreasonably closed or adjusted for a period of twelve years previous to the passing of this Act, and reopen any decrees in a suit, to which this clause applies, which was not fully satisfied by the 1 January 1939 and provides, that if anything has been paid or allowed on account of or after the 1 January 1939 in respect of the liability, the court shall order the lender to repay any sum which the court considers to be repayable in respect of that sum. The Sub-Section providing for refund after the 1st of January 1939 was opposed by the Congress Party which also opposed the giving of retrospective effect to the provisions of the clause in respect of the court not fully satisfied by the 1 January 1939. Reassembling on the next day, the 27th June, the Assembly passed the Bill without any opposition. Explaining that the Congress party did not propose to obstruct the passage of the Bill, Mr Sarat Chandra Bose pointed out that the attitude of his Party towards the Bill was one of cooperation. The Congress Party supported certain provisions of the Bill which were consistent with the Congress policy and principle. Such a Bill would lose its utility without provisions for cheap credit facilities which must be provided by the State. The Speaker regretted that in the matter of supply of cheap credit facilities, there was nothing so far to the credit of the Bengal Government. Mr Bose further explained that his party did not see eye to eye with the Government or with the European group in the matter of distinction that had been made in the Bill between banks and banks, in regard to some of the penalty clauses and also in regard to some of the retrospective provisions. Mr H.S. Suhrawardy, Labour Minister, who piloted the Bill, claimed that the Bill was going to do real good to the poor and down-trodden people of this Province. As regards the Opposition criticism of discrimination between banks, and banks; Mr Suhrawardy pointed out that the scheduled banks which had been excluded from the operation of the Bill were Indian Banks with Indian Capital. He repudiated the suggestion made by the Leader of the Opposition that the Government had not taken steps for the purpose of establishing rural credit. He pointed out that they were overhauling the cooperative credit societies. The Minister told the House that when the Assembly would meet next, the Government would be in a position to place before the House a well-considered scheme for rehabilitating the rural credit. The main provisions of the present Bill are, that the lender is

required to take licence from the Government for carrying on the business of money-lending after such date, not less than six months after the commencement of this Act, as the Provincial Government shall by notification in the Official Gazette appoint in this behalf. Compound interest is totally abolished and the maximum rate of interest recoverable from a borrower is reduced to eight per cent annum for secured and ten per cent per annum for unsecured loans irrespective of whether such interest accrues before or after the commencement of the Act. The Bill provides for the application of the 'Rule of Damdupat' and gives retrospective effect to the rate of interest prescribed and to the application of the 'Rule of Damdupat.'

29. Provincial Autonomy—An Appreciation

Behar Herald, 4 April 1939

4 April 1939

'It is mortifying for reflection that the Provincial Autonomy which was expected to be an improvement over the bureaucratic Government, has in practice proved in many respects to be worse than the latter in provinces where the Congress holds office under the High Command', says Mr Syed Abdul Aziz,¹ ex-Minister of Bihar. He adds: 'Within the short period of 18 months volcanoes of communal, caste, and class conflicts have made their appearances and have poured forth matters of a most poisonous and disastrous character. These volcanoes are nowhere more active than in Bihar'.

¹ Syed Abdul Aziz (1885–1947), educated in Patna; called to the Bar (Middle Temple) in 1911; President of the Patna district Khilafat Committee; member of the Bihar and Orissa legislative council (1926–36); minister of education (1934–37), Ahrar leader in Bihar and headed the United Party in the Bihar legislative council

30. (a) Bill to Provide for the Relief of Agricultural Debtors in the Province of Bombay

Bombay Chronicle, 5 April 1939.

Agricultural Debt Relief

Then, the Hon. Mr A.B. Latthe, Finance Minister, moved the first reading of the Bill to provide for the Relief of Agricultural Debtors in the Province of Bombay.

In the course of the statement of objects and reasons, the Minister stated:

'The evils resulting from agricultural indebtedness are well known. The cultivator's credit is low, and he has to pay a high rate of interest even for current finance. The economic servitude that arises from the money-lenders' grip on the agriculturists gives rise to several evils, the chief among them being disposal of the agricultural produce in an unfavourable season and at a price detrimental to the cultivator in order that the demand of the money-lender may be satisfied'.

Evils of Past Measure

Explaining the Bill, Mr Latthe stated that it was exhaustive and to a certain extent radical, radical because it set aside the ordinary conceptions of law. The written contracts were to be ruled out by oral evidence. The attempt to give relief to the indebted agriculturist was made years and years ago.

About 60 years ago the problem was so acute that certain measures had to be enacted. But subsequently the provisions of the Bill became inoperative and to-day the measure was saddled with a number of restrictions and it smacked of artificiality.

Two glaring results which had flown from the evil consequences of the past measure were that the courts were compelled to declare mortgage-deed in the case of an agricultural debtor into a sale-deed, and secondly the debtor was forced to enter into and execute a bond for a sum of money, larger than the one actually borrowed. The process was such that it had been characterised 'as competition between two sets of purchasers'. While the rate of interest was actually 9 or 10 per cent and the bond was for the same, the creditor got 20 per cent.

'Agriculturist' Defined

The present Bill introduced a number of changes. In the first place it defined that the 'agriculturist' for the purposes of the Bill was one who was a holder of land and that he personally cultivated it. Secondly the agriculturist-debtor whose debts on the 1 January 1939 was less than Rs 15,000 and more than Rs 100 could come within the purview of the Bill. The limit prescribed was based on the assumption that those whose debts were more than the amount mentioned should have entered into a voluntary contract in an atmosphere of freedom.

Under the new Bill there would be Local Debt Adjustment Board which was required to keep accounts on debts in the area concerned and dispose of cases as quickly as possible. If the debt had been contracted before 1 January 1931 the interest would be calculated at 6 per cent and if more had been paid then the difference of amount would be deducted from the principal amount. Debts contracted after 1931 would be calculated at 9 per cent under similar circumstances. The demarcation of the periods was made because Government thought that that was the turning-point of the great economic depression which overtook this country.

The debts would be redeemed at the present paying capacity of the debtor and according to the calculation, the money-lender might have to lose about 20 per cent.

Debt Paying Agency

The agency to payoff the debts would be the Land Mortgage Bank. The Minister preferred to eliminate the Provincial Land Mortgage Bank and entrust the work to the District Land Mortgage Bank, so that one per cent of interest which could be charged to the agriculturist might be saved. He, however, added that no decision had yet been taken in the matter. Government hoped that the interest charged for the instalments would not be more than 4½ per cent. The matter would then lie between the creditor and the Land Mortgage Bank. The Bank had to payoff the debts. The advice Government gave to the agency was to ask the creditor in the suit to reduce the burden by 60 or 65 per cent. It was the only way by which the creditor could be saved from waiting for 25 years and giving immediate relief to the agriculturist.

Property Inalienable

There were provisions in the Bill for making the property of the debtor inalienable or irremovable against temptation for further contracting of debts while the instalments were being paid. Whatever was attachable under the present system by a decision of the civil courts would not continue to be so after the provisions of the Act were enforced.

Before the Board gave its award in any suit, it was incumbent upon a debtor to be a member of a co-operative society which would give him a short-term credit for a productive or essential service through which the debt would be liquidated. In cases where co-operative societies did not exist, the money-lender or *sowcar* would give the same under certain restrictions and on the security of the next year's crop. During the adjustment period, there would be no chance or loophole for contracting further debts.

Problem Deeper

The Minister did not admit that all the needs of the agriculturist debtor would be met by the provisions of the Bill. Even if Government wiped off all the debts with one stroke of the pen, the agriculturists might again run into debts. The problem was deeper than the Bill sought to solve because the Bill did not seek to increase the productiveness of the soil or provide means to increase the income of the agriculturists. But the Bill certainly tried to dispel from their minds the constant, haunting fear that they would be deprived of their land and that they would be dragged before the courts. Government's main object was to give as much relief to the debtor as possible, without completely wiping out the debts due to the creditors.

Rao Bahadur and G.K. Chitale supporting the first reading stated that the MoneyLenders Bill and the Debt Redemption Bill should be enforced together so that both might work complementary to each other.

Mr Jahbvala, while congratulating Government on attempting to give relief to the indebted agriculturists, expressed the opinion that the Finance Minister should have gone further than he had done in the Bill. The Bill should have provided for the restoration of the right of ownership of lands which agriculturists had lost through indebtedness.

(b) Rural Debt Relief

Editorial, *Bombay Chronicle*, 7 April 1939

The Bombay Government's Bill to provide for the Relief of Agricultural Debtors in the province, which was introduced in the Legislative Assembly on Tuesday, passed its first reading and was referred to a Select Committee the very next day. This easy progress of the Bill was due to the soundness of its principle and its general scope. It is agreed by all that the heavy indebtedness of the agriculturist is a serious evil to society as a whole and that this evil must be tackled by all legitimate, even if radical, means. The old Deccan Agriculturists' Relief Act has failed to solve the problem and rural indebtedness has been increasing all over the country. Both the Royal Commission on Agriculture and the Banking Enquiry Committee strongly recommended legislation to secure equitable settlement of debts on a compulsory basis. All Congress Governments are pledged to carry out this reform and are fulfilling the pledges in accordance with local conditions. The Bombay Government's Small Holders Relief Act, 1938, was a cautious interim measure and is now replaced by the present Bill, which marks a considerable improvement on it.

Main Features

The main features of the Bill are as follows: It will apply to agriculturist debtors who cultivate lands personally and whose debts on 1 January 1939 are in each case less than Rs 15,000 and more than Rs 100. The debtor has also to be a member of a Resource Society approved by Government as this facilitates current crop finance by co-operative societies or other bodies approved by Government. The claims of creditors will be inquired into by a Debt Adjustment Board appointed by Government. The Board will investigate into the history of the claims, particularly whether the bond was executed for a larger sum than was actually paid and will scale down debts with due regard to the debtor's paying capacity. The board's award will be registered by a sub-judge and executed by the Collector. A debtor whose assets are inadequate to pay the total scaled down debt will be declared an insolvent.

The Root Cause

It will be seen from these provisions that the Bill helps the debtor by equitably reducing his debt and helps the creditor by ensuring the payment of the reduced debt, unless the debtor is found to be an insolvent. It is unfair to take a one-sided view of the Bill and call it, as did Mr S.V. Parulekar, only a Debt Recovery Bill. Indeed, it is not wrong to help an equitable recovery of fair debts. If all debts are wiped out, it will ruin the agriculturist's future borrowing power, apart from the injustice to 'bonafide' and just creditors. Nor is Mr Jamnadas Mehta's suggestion feasible, that Government should take over the debts and issue bonds to the creditors. This will only transfer the burden on to the general tax-payer, who is not now able to bear it. It is more reasonable to make the debtor realise his responsibility to repay a just debt according to his capacity. As regards the objection that the scope of the Bill is needlessly restricted to those agriculturists whose debts, are more than Rs 100, there is certainly force in it and it may be hoped the Select Committee will reduce the minimum amount of debt. The Committee may also be expected to make several other improvements in the details of the Bill in the light of the debate in the Assembly. It should be admitted, however, that mere Bills of this type will not effectively solve the problem of rural indebtedness, though they will certainly give much-needed relief. Mr Jamnadas Mehta is perfectly right in his view that the root cause of the agriculturists' indebtedness is the old and still continuing land revenue policy. To solve the rural debt problem effectively and permanently, the burden of land revenue must be considerably reduced. Congress Governments have promised this reform too, and we trust it will not be long delayed.

(c) Debt Relief (Bombay)

Congress Socialist, 23 April 1939

Agricultural indebtedness is one of the most vital problems of the agrarian economy. It saps the resources of the farmers in a manner which leaves them in a state of utter helplessness, so destructive to the incentive for better production. The problem was thoroughly investigated by expert economists by the time popular ministers undertook the reins of Government in the provinces.

When the Congress Ministers assumed office everyone expected a quick and radical solution of the problem. By this time almost every provincial government has introduced legislation for the relief of indebtedness. It is, however, strange that the legislation even of the Congress governments betrays a lack of any basic uniformity. Even more surprising is the absence of any consistent approach by the same government to the various problems of agrarian reform.

The Bill published by the Government of Bombay for the relief of agricultural debtors is in many ways different from similar legislation of other Congress governments.

The crucial point in a debt legislation is the basis on which debts are reduced, adjusted or conciliated. The Bombay Bill has laid down a very sensible basis, namely the farmers' capacity to pay, because for all practical purposes, it is the capacity to pay, rather than the pure justice of the case, which should determine the amount of debts. If the purpose of a debt legislation is to put the farmer on his feet and create for him conditions in which he can put in his best effort, then his indebtedness—just or unjust—must be brought within his capacity to pay. If it transgresses that limit, it will induce in him a sense of helplessness in which he can never put in his best efforts.

The Bill provides for the appointment of a Debt Adjustment Board by the Provincial Government. By providing that debts for which no application is made for adjustment within the prescribed period shall be deemed to have been discharged, the Bill has secured compulsory submission for adjustment. This itself is an advance on some other provincial legislation in which

conciliation is kept voluntary. As the first step the Board inquires into the history and merits of each debt transaction. This will enable the Board to arrive at the just quantum of the debt.

Though very few rules are laid down for the guidance of the Board for determining the merit of each case, it is to be hoped that the Board will be given proper latitude for opening each transaction and pruning the debts of all unauthorized and illegal addition. We would, however, wish that the Act should specifically lay down that the Board should take into consideration a severe fall in the price level while determining the just quantum of debt.

The debts are to be further adjusted to the paying capacity of the debtor. The paying capacity, broadly speaking, is defined as 80 per cent of the market value of his property. When the debts are scaled down to this level, the cultivator will surely be able to breathe an air of optimism.

The more difficult problem, however, is to see that the cultivator, thus freed from the crushing burden of indebtedness, does not once again sink into insolvency. Agriculture today is a losing concern, and a person who depends solely on it for his livelihood is bound to go bankrupt sooner or later. The Bill has, therefore made a provision that only those cultivators, who agree to be the members of the Resource Societies approved by the Government, will be permitted to take advantage of the debt adjustments under the Act. How exactly these resource societies would function, and how would they be able to make arrangements for financing the current crops of the relieved agriculturist, is, however, not known. Beyond doubt, the success or the failure of the legislation will depend on the ability of the Societies to help cultivators, whose whole property is tied up, with the sanction of the Government for the liquidation of his adjusted debts. We have no doubt that this will necessitate marketing of the members' crop by the societies. In short no scheme of agrarian reform can succeed unless the whole agricultural economy is integrated and regulated by a central organization, Government or Co-operative. But even the integrated economy will not succeed as long as the economy is basically un-remunerative, that is to say if the costs are higher than the prices. A structure depends as much on the top as on the foundation and one can't attend to one and neglect the other. We hope that the government will tackle the problem of agrarian reform in a comprehensive manner.

The one grave defect of the Bill is, however, that it excludes the whole class of tenants from the benefits of adjustments. The plea perhaps is that a tenant has no landed property on the basis of which his debts can be adjusted. If it is so, he must be given the advantage of the insolvency provision. For, we must not forget that the class of tenants constitutes even in a ryotwary area like Bombay, 25 per cent of what we vaguely call the agricultural population.

31. Congress Ministry and Riots

Letter to the Editor, *Leader*, 6 April 1939. The Correspondent—Rai Som Narayan Sinha—was associated with the District Congress Committee in Kanpur.

6 April 1939

Sir: It is perhaps very impertinent on my part to make any remarks regarding the attitude of the Congress Ministry of my own province towards the communal riots as I also happen to be a Congressman. But a Congressman in my humble opinion should be outspoken, frank and truthful. People had been under the impression that they would be much happier under Congress rule. Everybody ought to have thought like that. Decidedly the Congress Ministry has been very useful to the province from every standpoint. I have nothing to complain, although the drifting of the Ministry to the old order is obvious. Even Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru has remarked so. (Please see 'Where are We?' published recently in the *Leader*). But so far as the maintenance of law and order

is concerned it (Congress Ministry) has proved a failure. It has not been able to check acts of organised *goondaism*, murder, looting and arson. No proof is required to prove this. The numerous communal riots in one city or district after the other are the greatest proof.

If the Premier thinks that he cannot cope with the situation or that he is not bold enough to take strong measures, let him frankly say so to his party and give the portfolio of law and order to some other really capable man. If he finds that there is none in the Congress party suitable for the job then let him truthfully admit it and say to the people that he is helpless in the matter. But I am sure it is not so. There will be a number of such persons among the Congress MLAs to do the job better. I would request the Congress in the interest of the country, its men and women to revise its communal policy. Sri Krishna Nath Kaul, MLA, of Fyzabad¹ has resigned from the Congress as he was not satisfied with the communal policy of the Congress. Will it open the eyes of the Congress party? Who knows, some more resignations may come forward.

¹ He resigned on 3 April in protest against the 'pro-Muslim' policies of the Congress Ministry.

32. The Ministry in Bombay: B.G. Kher to Vallabhbhai Patel, 16 April 1939

Copy of a letter addressed to the Congress President, B.G. Kher Papers, File No. 6, NMML

I have had a discussion with my colleagues as to the subject which you referred to in your letters dated 3 April 1939.

2. No ultimatum was given by the Bombay Ministry to the Governor, or indication to the grave implications of the situation arising out of Mahatmajī's fast¹. But it pointed out to him the state of tension in the country. I think we should have failed in our duty if we had not done so and pointed out the necessity of prompt action to save Gandhiji's life. No communication whatsoever was sent to the Government of India.

3. It is not necessary for me to state what I and our Cabinet might have done if the Government of India had not interfered in the matter of Gandhiji's fast. No doubt the situation in that event would have been serious, and before resigning it might have become necessary to make a reference either to the Parliamentary Sub-Committee, or to the Working Committee or the President. I would like to tell you frankly that I do not think that I have done anything which I should not have been done. In matters relating to rural administration, we have to take prompt decisions and so long as we act in consonance with the principles of our party, neither the President nor the Working Committee nor the Parliamentary Sub-Committee should desire to interfere. I am perfectly certain that your decisions would have been the same as ours.

I wish to assure you that there was no intention either deliberately or otherwise to ignore you. No information was sent because there was nothing to send information about. I had discussed this matter with His Excellency the Governor. The press reports, as you know, very often attribute such steps to the Ministry as the press desire them to take and put on scare headlines. I think the best course is to trust the several Ministries and not the press. I am sure you will at once believe me when I say that I am incapable of indiscipline, it is ingrained in the whole of my being. I have not acted contrary to the needs either of duty or of discipline.

I think the Khare episode² has no application at all to this occasion. I have given you my reaction to your letter frankly as you desired me to do so.

As regards your circular letter dated 3 April, without going into the merits of the allegations that several Ministers canvassed, my colleagues and I are of the view that Congressmen, by accepting

office do not cease to be Congressmen and, in the domestic affairs of the Congress, are entitled to act exactly as other members of the organisation in all matters connected with it.

We do not also subscribe to the view that the Ministers are like the members of a civil service in an administration. They are non-political agents of a policy laid down by politicians who form the Government. That view would deny to the Ministers the rights of a full member and would be destructive of the confidence which the Ministers enjoy by reason of their being called upon to perform the arduous and responsible duties of their office....

¹ The fast was over the Rajkot issue, where the ruler backed out of an agreement with Patel. 'A breach of promise', the Mahatma wrote in the *Harijan* of 11 March, 'shakes me to my root, especially when I am in any way connected with the author of the breach. And if it costs my life, which after all at the age of 70 has no insurance value, I should most willingly give it in order to secure due performance of a sacred and solemn promise'.

² Narayan Bhaskar Khare (1882-1969) was President of the Nagpur Provincial Congress Committee, 1935-37; member of the Central Legislative Assembly, 1935-37; Chief Minister of CP, 14 July 1937 to 20 July 1938. He joined the Hindu Mahasabha in 1949 and was its President.

The 'Khare episode' was related to a bitter rivalry between the Hindi-speaking and the Marathi-speaking members of the CP Assembly. Matters came to a head when Khare tried to defend the conduct of his law minister over the release of four Muslims convicted in a rape case. Eventually, Khare had to resign on 20 July 1938. The Congress Working Committee held him guilty of grave errors of judgment and gross indiscipline and removed him from the party's membership for two years. Khare, on the other hand, blamed the High Command for his fall, attributing it to 'devilish revenge, jealousy, and malice'.

33. Congress and Reforms: Jawaharlal Nehru to G.B. Pant, 18 April 1939

C. Rajagopalachari Papers (2), NMML

You must have already been informed of the resolution passed by the Council of the UP Provincial Congress Committee regarding the amendment of the Government of India Act which has now been put before the British Parliament.¹ The chief amendment proposed relates to a War emergency when it is intended to arm the Central Government with executive powers in provinces. This is a very serious incursion into the present powers of provincial governments. It may lead to an all-round limitation of their activities. As you know, there is a strong feeling in the Congress, which has been voiced in the recent resolution on the National Demand passed at Tripuri,² that provincial autonomy as practiced thus far has largely exhausted itself, and a change is urgently necessary in the direction of full freedom. The change proposed however by the British Government is in the reverse direction and it is clear that it cannot be accepted or tolerated. The Council of the UPCCC has declared in the clearest language that no such change by the British Parliament will be accepted or recognised and it has called up the Provincial Government to act up to this declaration.

This decision of the Council is in full accord with the Congress policy as repeatedly laid down. I have no doubt that some such resolution would have been passed at Tripuri if the fact of such an amendment had been publicly known then. The decision casts a heavy responsibility on the Congress government. They have not only to act up to it in letter and spirit when the time comes but they have also to make it perfectly clear from now onwards to the British Government, or their representatives in India, what their policy is going to be. This policy is likely to lead to a conflict with the Government of India. It may lead to resignation or dismissal of Ministers or to a suspension of the constitution in the provinces. We have thus to be prepared for contingencies and to inform others concerned of these possible consequences.

I understand that your government has previously given strong expression to its opposition to this amendment of the Government of India Act. It now appears that in spite of unanimous

opposition of Congress governments, the British Government is still firm on the measure. The latest news that we have received indicates that the new legislation will be rushed through the British Parliament by the end of this month. There is thus little time to lose and I would ask of you and your government to give earnest consideration to this. It is clear that it is a major issue for us and the country.

I am informing the Congress President of the Resolution of our Council and sending him a copy of this letter. I have no doubt that he will approve the resolution and attitude of the Council of the PCC as any other attitude, under the circumstances, would have been a violation of Congress policy.

¹ A Bill to amend the Government of India Act was introduced in the House of Lords on 5 April 1939. One of its clauses empowered the federal executive to give directions to the provinces for the exercise of their powers. On 7 April 1939, the UPPCC council decided not to accept any further limitation of powers of the provincial government.

⁴ The resolution was moved by Jawaharlal Nehru at the subjects committee meeting at the Tripuri Congress, 11 March 1939. For the text of resolution, see S. Gopal (ed.), *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, Vol. 9, (Delhi, 1978), pp. 521–22.

34. Relief to Tenantry: The Bihar Ministry

Behar Herald, 18 April 1939

18 April 1939

The Government of Bihar have granted relief to the *kisans* of Santal Parganas to the extent of 25 per cent. According to the amended Regulations to which the Governor-General has duly given his assent, rents of *kists* (instalments) payable by *raiya*s and *mulraiya*s and other headmen are reduced by 25 per cent. Similarly *mulraiya*s and headmen are prohibited from realizing more than 75 per cent of the rent and *kists* immediately due before the issue of the Regulation.

35. Thrilling Moments at Baradari:¹

Frontal Attack on Congress Government

Leader, 23 April 1939

23 April 1939

The Baradari of Lucknow has, to its imperishable credit, witnessed many a memorable scene and historic assemblage, but never have circumstances conspired more than in the last three weeks to raise it to the level of a battle-front and give it the significance of a battle-cry. A meeting of citizens, however representative, just convened to criticize the policy and measures of the Government of the province, would have passed off as an ordinary affair without ado or hitch. It would have attracted attention no more than a pebble on the shore or a leaf in the wind does. But we are living in strange and stirring times. Things just happen without notice, without provocation. Did not Hitler occupy Czechoslovakia² one fine morning? Did not Mussolini invade Albania?³ So did some of the Congressmen raid Baradari and convert it into a graveyard of civil liberties, and that too when the foremost organizer of civil liberties in India was at Lucknow!⁴ The disorderly and disgraceful scenes of the 29th of March,⁵ provided the dark and sinister background against which the adjourned meeting was held in conditions none too certain, but concluded amidst scenes of unprecedented enthusiasm.

It was a considerable affair. The spacious hall was crowded, the gathering representative, the cause just, the purpose determined. Unwilling to reduce a great province to ruin by the fads and

follies of a new Government, however 'popular, and undeterred by the ridicule and wrath of the mighty at whose beck and call an overwhelming majority lay, there assembled the representatives of parties, communities and interests whose combined services were largely responsible for the progress of UP in the pre-Pant era. But more striking than the audience was the man who agreed to preside over the deliberations of the conference by coming out of his retirement at the call of public duty.

Tej Bahadur Sapru, who made so many fine speeches on memorable occasions, had perhaps never spoken with greater feeling or deeper conviction than when he administered a warning to the Government to beware of the Nemesis which is the lot of any Government that is bereft of all moral prestige. It was a speech, directed to appeal to one's reason and not to one's emotions. It was full of argument and exposition: it was a feat of sustained eloquence—eloquence that owes its inspiration to the justness of the cause and the conviction of the speaker....

Little wonder that speaker after speaker—and the speakers consisted of men of such distinguished position and varied talent as Sir Shafaat Ahmad Khan,⁶ Sir Tracy Gavin Jones,⁷ and Sir Maharaj Singh⁸—rejoiced over Sir Tej's return to active public life where his throne was lying vacant.

Thus the meeting at Baradari is memorable for two things: (1) for launching the first organised public protest against, or frontal attack on, a Government who lost their grip and balance, and (2) for launching it under the leadership of one whose voice will be heard far and wide, even beyond the shores of India. Bigger issues too are involved. It is not merely a question of the employment tax, however important it is just at present. Nor is it merely the financial policy of the Government that is at stake. Critics of the Congress must bear in mind that Congressmen treat all their measures and policies and programmes as an artistic piece, one and indivisible. They are all part of a political philosophy, which despite its myriad manifestations, has one cardinal doctrine and one set purpose. The tunes are different, but the song is the same—and non-Congressmen have but to face the music!

It is with this that the Baradari 'regiment' must reckon. It must recognise that the general policy of the Congress is soaked in sentiment and sophistry, in pride and passion, and that it is largely in the hands of men who are but poor instruments in the hands of the Avatars that speak their own language and interpret their own laws. And in UP the position is worse since we have a Ministry that is divided in outlook though not in aim and is under marching orders of a strange amalgam of leftist inclinations, rightist loyalties and individual fads and fancies, are a trifle embarrassing to it. Starting under such handicaps, it has gone about its business neither with a steady step nor in a sure direction. Misfortune—but whose fault?—dogged its footsteps, but the Ministry refuses to learn. Things have been going wrong in the UP and all over UP—and not in one respect or two either. Is it a question of agrarian troubles? That UP that is involved? Or of industrial disorders? Again, is UP of a leftist eruption? Invariably UP has proved to be the danger spot of Congress India, the UP Government have earned an undesirable notoriety for mishandling situations. And it is the cumulative effect of a series of follies and failures—and it seems to be a non-stop series—that has paved the way to Baradari and the new rally against the Congress while it is the conviction that unless the Congress Ministers in UP are shaken out of their self-complacency, the UP will go down the precipice, that has brought Sir Tej back to public life.

Now, what next? It is absurd to suggest or think that if the employment tax is passed or thrown out, Sir Tej will find his occupation gone. As Sir Gavin Jones said, everything must be done to 'ruin and wreck this Government'. In other words, a firm front must be organised against a Government which mistakes headstrong government for strong government, and a wider front too against the Congress so long as it is the Congress which we find it to be. It is unto this end that

the committee set up at Baradari meeting must work, despite odds and opposition. The leadership of Sir Taj—and that other veteran, Chintamani⁹—should be harnessed to no smaller purpose. With them at the helm the non-Executive Committee elements in the UP can be sure that while opposition to the Congress may be derided, it cannot be destroyed, and that patriotism will not be treated as the monopoly of a single party, however strong. Let Baradari proclaim to the Congress and the country that unthinking majorities are no Maginot Line that make ministries invulnerable to attack and immune from destruction, and that so long as the UP remains 'our torment and our dishonour', the Baradari Regiment is entitled to the fullest public support.

¹ A structure with twelve doors or openings. The reference here is to a large, decorative hall in Qaiser Bagh, Lucknow.

² Hitler occupied Czechoslovakia on 15 March 1939.

³ Mussolini invaded Albania on 7 April 1939.

⁴ Tej Bahadur Sapru (1875–1949); advocate, Allahabad High Court, 1896–1926, member, UP legislative council, 1913–16; member, imperial legislative council, 1916–20; member, AICC, 1906–17; president, UP Liberal League, 1918–20; member, Reforms Enquiry Committee, 1924; played a leading role in the making of the Nehru Report, 1928; delegate to the Round Table Conferences, 1930–2. 'It has been a very humdrum sort of life' Sapru said on his 70th birthday, 'punctuated in private spheres by occasional moments of happiness and more by sorrow than anything else. In public life there has been nothing remarkable except that I have represented a school of thought which is on the wane'.

⁵ There were violent scenes at the Baradari when a group of non Congressmen assembled to voice their protest against the financial policies of the UP government.

⁶ Shafaat Ahmad Khan (1893–1948) was a historian who took an active interest in UP politics.

⁷ Tracy French Gavin Jones (b. 1872) was an accomplished mechanical and mining engineer and was closely associated with various engineering enterprises in Rhodesia and India. He was member of UP legislative council, 1922–25 and legislative assembly, 1926–29. He was a key figure in the UP Chambers of Commerce and was president of the UP branch of the European Association, 1930–1, 1932–34.

⁸ Maharaj Singh (b. 1879); educated at Harrow and Balliol College, Oxford; secretary to UP government, 1919; commissioner of Allahabad, 1927, 1929, Banaras, 1928; chief minister in Jodhpur State, 1931; and member of UP legislative assembly, 1937.

⁹ Chiravoori Jayneswara Chintamani (1880–1941), editor of the *Leader* (Allahabad), 1909–23 and 1926–31; member, UP Legislative Council, 1916–23; general secretary, National Liberal Federation of India, 1918–20; and 1923–29; minister of education and industries, UP, 1921–23; member, UP legislative council, 1927–36; member, Round Table Congress, 1930; president of the All-India Anti-Communal Award Conference, 1935, and All-India Journalists Conference 1935; knighted in 1939; author *Indian School Reform and Indian Politics since the Mutiny*, and edited the *Speeches and Writings of Sir Pherozeshah Mehta*.

36. The Punjab Ministry

Leader, 28 April 1939

28 April 1939

The Punjab Assembly discussed on Monday last a resolution sponsored by the Congress party expressing no confidence in the Ministry.¹ We note that among the 'notable features' of the present regime to which attention was drawn by its critics was the use of the Criminal Law Amendment Act. We do not propose to discuss here the question whether Mr Sikander Hayat Khan's administration has been a failure or a success. But so far as we remember he is not the only Premier who has made use of the powers conferred on the Government by the Criminal Law Amendment Act. Other Premiers, including those who have signed the Congress creed, have utilised those powers. How is it that it did not occur to the Congress party in those provinces to express no confidence in the Ministry? We recall that when a resolution was moved in the Madras Assembly by a non-Congress member asking the Government to repeal the Criminal Law Amendment Act, the Premier made a very angry speech in opposing it and the members of his

party voted against the resolution, which was consequently rejected. It is suggested that what is considered a repressive law in a non-Congress province, develops unexpected virtues in Congress provinces?

¹ The no-confidence motion was moved by Gopichand Bhargava (1889–1966).

37. The UP Government

'The UP Government', Editorial, *Leader*, 30 April 1939

30 April 1939

We hope we are not wrong in assuming that the UP Government are beginning to realise that government is not the same thing as a parrot-like repetition of high-sounding phrases and slogans. Throats have become hoarse by now by constant repetition of certain slogans of an 'anti-imperialist' character. It is almost nauseating to hear from day to day on certain platforms that the Congress Government is a democratic government, that it stands for the toiling millions, that the present order of society must go, that 'feudalism and capitalism' must make room for a new and bright order of society in which the classes which have remained submerged so far will come to the surface and the classes which have hitherto enjoyed all the good things of the earth shall go down. If such cries and such slogans by themselves could usher into existence a new heaven and a new earth, we should have expected that by now the United Provinces would have become the paradise which Congress enthusiasts say they may yet become. When the Congress Government started on their new career they started with an untruth on their lips. They knew that they were going to work the constitution and yet, to win cheap popular applause they declared to their unthinking admirers that they were going to wreck it. That habit still clings to some of their Ministers. The other day the Minister of Justice flattered himself in a speech in the Assembly when he said that they were all engaged in the happy pastime of tearing the Government of India's Act into pieces. When is this hypocrisy going to end?

The period of honeymoon is over. That was the period when thousands from Unnao were brought in front of the Assembly just to shout blessings to the Congress and curses on the zamindars, when the flag-hoisting ceremony was conducted with all the solemnity of a ritual and when the Premier and other Ministers addressed their 'brothers' from the steps of Council House. Now that the Congress Government have been tried for nearly two years and have bungled and bungled, people are wondering what has happened to this Government. They refuse to accept at their face value the inane pomposities of the Premier, the jeering thrusts of the Minister of Justice and the exasperating *obiter dicta* of the Revenue Minister.¹ People again ask themselves what has happened to the UP Government. Their own men—we mean Congressmen—are no longer disposed to spare them. Witness what Pandit Balakrishna Sharma² of Kanpur—not an imperialist, not a Liberal, not a zamindar—has said and is saying to the Congress Government.³ The adjectives which he has used about the Congress Government, if used by a non-Congress paper, would have brought foam to the lips of the Ministers. Witness again what the Banaras Hindus have got to say of the Congress Government. Above all, do not forget what the Shias and Sunnis of Lucknow have got to say to the Government and have actually done.⁴ The Assembly was not sitting in a drawing room nor behind barricades. But still it had a right to be left alone to carry on its work unmolested and without being subjected to any humiliation. This 'civil liberty' has been denied to the Assembly. By whom? By the Sunnis who have been, to the chagrin of the Shias, privileged to recite openly

Madh-e-Sahaba on the Bara Wafaat day.⁵ We wonder whether those Sunnis whose conduct, we agree, deserves every condemnation, derived their inspiration from the breakers of the Baradari conference.

We are now told that the Government are determined to put down all such outbreaks of lawlessness and for that reason they are imposing punitive police on Lucknow. That is good. It is never too late to be wise. You can play with fire up to a certain limit, but then the time must come when you must try to extinguish it. We therefore sincerely congratulate the UP Government on trying to be wise. Similarly at Kanpur they are imposing punitive police. Probably Pandit Balakrishna Sharma will have something to say about it. But it may be permissible to others also to say that more timely steps, greater courage and a more clear-sighted policy might have saved the Government much of the ugliness of the situation for which the primary responsibility must lie with them.

The first essential of a successful government is that it must be able to maintain law and order and must not allow its prestige to be challenged. That the situation has caused and is causing the Government much anxiety is quite obvious. Even if the report that the Premier is thinking of resigning is wholly without foundation, as we are disposed to think it is, it is admitted by his colleague that every evening he develops temperature and it was particularly high on Monday evening,⁶ perhaps due to the strain and worry caused by the demonstrators in the Assembly chamber. We deeply sympathise with the Premier and wish him an early recovery and we sincerely hope that there is no question of his resignation. Nevertheless it is clear from Kidwai's own statement issued to the press that the situation has affected the health of at least the head of the Government. We think that it is still possible for this Government to regain some of the lost ground. But this cannot be done without a change of policy and methods, and we may add, temper and manners. Let them think less and say less of the vices and failings of their predecessors. Let them think more of the problems that they have got to face today and tomorrow. Let them adopt an attitude of perfectly straightforward dealing with all communities and all those who do not belong to their fold. So long as a government can issue from its publicity department the sort of stuff addressed to the Mahomedans, which we published a few days ago, recounting to the Mahomedans, the restrictions placed on the Hindus, so long they cannot hope to command the respect either of the Hindus or of the Mahomedans.⁷ What was the good of appointing a High Court judge to investigate the Shia-Sunni controversy and then rejecting his recommendation and issuing orders allowing one section of the community to recite publicly Madh-e-Sahaba and to tell the other that it will not have the liberty to recite what it considers to be a part of its religious duty.⁸ The situation has been allowed by the Government themselves to deteriorate by their hasty and ill-considered decisions. And now they consider it a part of their prestige not to revoke an order which has led to all this trouble. This is not the way to govern or to earn the confidence of the public. If the Government cannot change their policy or their methods of work they can at least cease to use boastful language in all self-righteousness and self-exaltation, which they are never tired of using in season and out of season. If they cannot even do this, they can at least exercise some restraint and control over their young hotspurs who can indulge in any sort of language on the floor of the house. Once they change their policy, their methods of work and their manners and try to make a real attempts to maintain law and order, they will be entitled to the support of those who believe in peace and peaceful evolution. Strong measures alone will not do. What is wanted is a clear, fair and firm policy. This alone can rescue the Government from their present position.

¹ Rafi Ahmad Kidwai (1894–1954); graduated from the MAO College at Aligarh in 1918; joined non cooperation movement, jailed twice; worked as private secretary to Motilal Nehru after release; Secretary, Reception Committee Indian National Congress, 1925; elected to Central Legislative Assembly on Swaraj Party ticket, 1926; resigned in 1930,

Secretary, UP Congress Committee, 1931; elected President, UP Congress Committee, 1935; lost elections to the UP Legislative Assembly, 1937; Minister of land revenue and jails in the Pant Ministry in UP, 1937-39; Home Minister in the UP Cabinet after the second general elections; minister for communications, 1947-51, and minister for food and agriculture.

⁴ Balakrishna (Navin) Sharma (1897-1960); educated at Ujjain, and Kanpur; came in contact with Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi; joined two literary organisations, Sahitya Mandal and Sahitya Samiti; attended the annual session of the Congress held at Lucknow in 1916; plunged into non-cooperation movement, 1920; after Vidyarthi's death emerged as the undisputed leader of Kanpur city; member of AICC for 34 years; imprisoned several times between 1920 and 1947; elected to Lok Sabha from Kanpur, 1952; nominated to Rajya Sabha, 1957.

⁵ See below, 'Swelling Chorus of Condemnation', 1 May 1939 for details of Balakrishna Sharma's article.

⁶ The reference is to the Shia-Sunni riots in Lucknow caused by disputes over the route of the *tazia* procession and the insistence of the Sunnis to recite the *Madh-e-Sahaba* (Praise of the four 'orthodox' Khalifas).

⁷ Madh-e-Sahaba refers to the recitation of praise in memory of the four 'orthodox' Khalifas (Abu Bakr, Umar, Usman and Ali). The Shias, on the other hand, insisted on their right to *tabarra*, i.e., condemnation of the first three Khalifas, who are supposed to have usurped the rightful claims of Ali and his family.

⁸ Harry Haig, UP's Governor, informed the Viceroy on 9 May that Pant was still suffering from fever and reported a news item in the Statesman that the Prime Minister was proceeding on leave and that K.N. Katju was to act for him.

⁹ See enclosure: 1, below and fn 1 to 'Swelling Chorus of Condemnation', 1 May 1939, below.

¹⁰ See enclosure: 2, below.

38. Swelling Chorus of Condemnation

Leader, Editorial, 1 May 1939. See also the editorial entitled 'Government and Criticism', *Leader*, 6 May 1939.

1 May 1939

The Congress Government in UP have been treating with contempt criticisms by non-Congress leaders of their weak and inefficient policy in dealing with movements, agrarian, communal or Communist, which have been sapping the foundations of law and order, and ascribing unworthy motives to their critics. They have been seeking to placate the extremist forces by making concessions which cannot stand the test of reason, justice or fairplay. They probably think that their overwhelming majority in the Legislative Assembly is enough to enable them to carry on the administration, and entitle them to treat without courtesy and consideration the views of those who have the misfortune of differing from them. They are doubtless satisfied that they have the monopoly of patriotism and wisdom and that those who oppose them are either fools or knaves—perhaps both. Heedless of friendly warning and well-meant advice and eager to bring out a new heaven and a new earth by a plethora of hasty and ill-considered legislative, financial and administration measures, they have brought about a general unsettlement, let loose forces they cannot control, and are fast losing their grip over the affairs of the province. Lawlessness is spreading, life and property have become less secure than before, communalism is rampant, Communist forces are active; Hindus, Muslims, landlords, industrialists, employer and employees, public and private, and the middle classes, all are gravely dissatisfied.

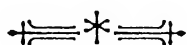
Things have come to such a deplorable pass that even a section of Congressmen has begun openly to give vent to their feelings of disappointment, indignation and even disgust at the inability of the 'popular' Government adequately to discharge their primary function. This feeling has been given expression to by Pandit Balakrishna Sharma, a member of the provincial Congress executive council and the President of the Cawnpore city Congress committee, in an article in the *Pratap*, a translation of which will be found on another page. He has told the Government bluntly to 'govern or get out'. He writes:

'How long can this State of affairs go on? This weak-kneed policy is proving fatal to the life of the province'.

He further writes that 'Government business cannot be carried on like this' and asks the Government whether it would give up its policy of drift. Rarely do we find ourselves in agreement with Pandit Balakrishna Sharma, but we are bound to agree with him in the present instance, not wholly but largely. While boastful declarations have been made of the swelling membership of the Congress, the fact is that the Congress has today far less popular support than it had when it assumed the responsibility of office in the province. This can be easily demonstrated by a few test bye-elections. The two communal organisations, the Muslim League and the Hindu Mahasabha, have gained enormously in strength and the cause alike of nationalism and of freedom has received a serious set-back. All this is due to the inefficient administration of the Congress Government who, puffed up with power, dominated by a narrow and intolerant party spirit and handicapped by many unpractical and unsound election pledges, have been marching from blunder to blunder. They refuse to practice introspection, they blame their critics for their ever-increasing problems and perplexities. But when even Congressmen have joined the swelling chorus of condemnation, should they not pause and think?

Pandit Balakrishna Sharma's article shows to what extent the weak and even partial policy of the Government has exasperated some of their ardent supporters. And we are sure, their number is not small, though due to their notions of party discipline they have kept mum, at least as far as the general public are aware. Sharma has given a bold lead to his fellow-Congressmen in the province and has asked the Government to make without any delay a clear and unequivocal declaration of their policy on certain questions of a communal nature which have been greatly agitating the public mind. We are very doubtful whether the Government will do anything of the kind. Of one thing we are certain. If the Government do not speedily realise the folly of their ways and do not take steps to reassure the public mind, they shall in no time be left without many supporters and the feeling of security, which their heavy majority has given them and which has made them so disregardful of criticism, will not be of much help in saving them from a well-deserved fate.¹

¹ Harry Haig reported the following to the Viceroy on 9 May 1939: 'The Hindus remain very critical of the Government on the ground that the Ministers are through weakness favouring the Muslims. A number of factors contribute to this feeling. The Hindus think that on the whole in the big communal riots they had the worst of it. It certainly was so in Cawnpore and in the present state of public opinion they interpret that as being due to deliberate bias on the part of the officials in favour of the Muslims. Much feeling also was created by the very severe curfew order against the Hindus in Benares.... This was regarded as a most unfair and arbitrary act of discrimination against the Hindus. The Government themselves had also put out a very foolish piece of propaganda for the Muslims, enumerating the cases in which they had taken restrictive action against Hindus, and this was seized upon by the Hindus as evidence that Government were not treating the Hindus fairly. All this has given rise to a good deal of feeling which has been worked up by the Hindu Mahasabha and by the many Hindus who for various reasons are now opposed to the Congress. Even Congress Hindus joined in the attack and there was a remarkable onslaught on the Government in the *Pratap*, perhaps the most widely read vernacular paper in the Province. This took the form of a signed article by Pandit Bal Krishna Sharma, its editor, the President of the Cawnpore City Congress Committee, a man whom I mentioned in my letters of December 6 and December 23, 1938 as an influential ambitious and unreliable person, who is more responsible than any one else for the conditions of unrest and disorder that have prevailed so long in Cawnpore. The Ministry have always been afraid of him and he has now requited their forbearance by accusing them of inability to maintain order. If they had taken firm action against him, we should have been spared a great deal of the trouble in Cawnpore. Balkrishna Sharma encourages both communism and communalism. At the moment he seems to be trying to mobilize Hindu discontent against the Ministry'.



39. Congress and Lawlessness

Leader, Editorial, 8 May 1939. The *Leader* was quite consistent in its criticism of the Ministry's performance. So, when the UP Government broached the issue of awarding a knighthood to its editor, C.V. Chintamani, G.B. Pant declared 'that this honour would greatly weaken the position of the Government'. He regarded Chintamani 'as a man who has done the Government much harm, and therefore objects to his being honoured'.

Haig to Linlithgow, 12 June 1939, Haig Papers, Microfilm Roll No. 1, NMML

8 May 1939

What are things coming to? Where will the spirit of rowdy lawlessness stalking in the country, and in our province in particular, stop, if it is going to stop at all? The frequency of communal riots has already begun to make people wonder whether the security of life which any civilized Government are expected to guarantee to their people, is going to become a thing of the past. In rural areas, the increase of crime and the decreasing capacity of the police to bring the culprits to book is not expected to inspire greater confidence in the Government. The feelings of Shias have been injured to such an extent by the Government's mishandling of the Shia-Sunni controversy¹ that a small community like theirs has felt compelled to defy the law and to court arrest in thousands², and the province has been saddled with one more problem of a communal nature. The new restrictions imposed on Hindus are of a severe nature. The new restrictions imposed on Hindus at several places, and advertised by the Publicity Department of the Government themselves, have begun to create a feeling of nervousness among the Hindus as to the future of their civil rights and liberties under Congress rule. The way non-Congressmen's meetings can be broken up by the enthusiasts of the Congress, without eliciting anything more than sneers on the organizers from the Premier himself, has gone to produce an impression that any liberty that people may be allowed in expressing their political views—unless they have the force of numbers behind them—is a matter more of mercy than of right. And now the question must be on the lips of many after the Assembly hall incident as to whether the Government are at least in a position to safeguard the 'personal safety' of the legislators—asks Mr Gautam³—while they are engaged in official work. The question is not of our imagination; the report of the proceedings of the Assembly should be enough to show that it was not absent from the minds of MLAs themselves.

Verily, it will not be easy, even if it were possible, to find a parallel in the recent history of India to the high discount at which respect for law and authority stands today. Even those who criticize the Government for their weakness, will not find it easy to withhold their commiseration in the difficulties which defiance of authority has created for the Government in all directions, making them an object of ridicule, if not of contempt, in the eyes of the law-breakers. The council chamber incidents have at last stirred them into action to put down lawlessness—or rather some features of it. But the trouble has become deep-rooted enough and the Congress Governments, even if they decided to show greater strength, must find themselves helpless except to the extent of suppressing some of its outward symptoms. For, the Congress has sown and is still sowing the wind and the Congress Governments must reap with the whirlwind. A serious attempt to uproot lawlessness will be possible only if, and when, the Congress leadership deems it proper to change its whole outlook on the matter. It is the Congress which has preached doctrines which cut at the very root of respect for law and order. And it is the result of those doctrines that people have come to feel that an agitation based on mere argument and reason is nothing better than praying and petitioning and that what makes for success in public matters is organisation of the people concerned by appeals to their factions and then, attempts at coercion by the force of numbers in a disciplined and non-violent way, if possible, and otherwise, if necessary. This method of force—call it not

violent force, if you please—has caught on and some non-Congress politicians and parties have gone a step further in imitating the ways of the Congress without insisting even on the half-hearted emphasis which it generally lays on non-violence. The natural result is the widespread spirit of lawlessness galore, which even the blind can see all around easily enough. The attitude of the more responsible Congress leaders may be said to have undergone a slight—though, unfortunately, only a slight—change since the Congress Ministries came into being. They have begun to show some reluctance in encouraging defiance of law and authority. But as soon as they see the wilder elements in their organisation impatient for what they consider to be real politics, they are found less ready to use their restraining influence and risk their popularity than to compete with them, as it were, in proving their forwardness. Of course, they strongly disapprove of the adoption of methods similar to their own by non-Congress parties, drawing distinctions where none exists in the underlying fundamentals. This duality, however, will not do. The Congress will not be allowed, as it is not allowed already, to retain a monopoly of troublesome tactics.

The choice before the Congress leaders is clear enough. If they are really anxious that the Congress Governments should succeed in achieving a better record of peace and order, they will not only have to encourage the latter to take up a stronger attitude in respect of the maintenance of law and order, simultaneously they will also have to change radically their own ways and methods. They will have to give up the tall talk of the imminence of their major conflict with the British Government by the discredited method of 'Satyagraha' which has proved to be nothing short of a negation of law and order. They will have to abandon their attempts at encouraging, if not creating, lawlessness in the states in the name of civil disobedience. They will have to restrain the wilder spirits in their ranks from inflaming the passions of the labourers and the tenants against employers and landlords. They will have to tell their followers that civil rights and liberties should exist as much for non-Congressmen as for them. They will have to recognise the fact, however unpleasant, that other political parties have as much right to exist, to function without molestation and to influence the course of the country's progress as the Congress. They will have to learn that political principles are more important than vote-catching devices. And last but not least, they will have to realise that for a political party it is as unsafe in practice as it is wrong in principle, to arouse hopes impossible of fulfillment in order to secure popular support, however virtuous the motives behind this love for power which has been causing so much internal conflict inside the Congress itself. Then alone can the Congress Governments acquire that normal authority without which no Government can hope to succeed in maintaining law and order and ensuring to their people a reasonable security of life and property. The Congress has long indulged in the ways of mere agitators and wreckers. But things have undergone a significant change. The Congress can no longer claim to be a party in perpetual opposition and the work of government and an agitator's mentality go ill together. A Government responsible for peace and security and justice to all classes of people cannot afford, like mere agitators, to shrink from unpopularity or to run after popularity with any one class, however numerous, or with any single community, however vociferous. The Congress will have to face squarely the position that it cannot have the best of both worlds. It may govern or fight the British Government; it cannot do, or even pretend to do, both simultaneously. The pretence will have to be given up and the Congress will have to readjust its ways to the onerous responsibilities of administration that must rest on any Government worth the name. There is an obvious limit beyond which a combination of the dual role of governing and agitating cannot be carried on with safety. The Congress may not find it convenient to heed these obvious considerations, but it can ignore them only at its peril. What concerns us more than the fate of the Congress is that the country will suffer until that political party has mended its ways

or has been ousted from its position of dominance by a revulsion of popular feeling, which has already begun to make itself visible as well as perceptible.

¹ There was trouble in Lucknow in April 1939 between the Shias and Sunnis consequent on a UP government communique of 30 March 1939 stating that the Sunnis could recite Madh-e-Sahaba at a public meeting or in the procession taken out on Bara Wafat day (the death anniversary of the Prophet). The Shias resented this and launched an agitation to secure the same concession for reciting Tabarra. An order under section 144 was issued in Lucknow by the District Magistrate in view of the Shia-Sunni tension on 2nd May.

² On 5 May a meeting of Shia leaders at Lucknow decided to continue their civil disobedience campaign in reciting the Tabarra until a reasonable compromise was reached.

³ Mohanlal Gautam (b. 1902); general secretary, UPPCC, 1930-31, and secretary, 1936 and 1963-64; imprisoned several times during the freedom movement; secretary of the Congress Socialist Party, 1934; member, Constituent Assembly; general secretary, AICC, 1950-51; minister, UP, 1952-54 and 1957-60; member, Rajya Sabha, 1969-72.

40. On Jawaharlal Nehru: Zetland to Linlithgow, 9 May 1939

Zetland Papers, Acc. No. 1969, NAI

[Extract]

I read with great interest Haig's account of his meeting with Nehru. It is clear that Haig formed the same opinion of Nehru as has been formed by most people who have met him, namely, that he is scarcely the stuff of which fiery crusaders are made. He finds it difficult indeed to picture him as a vehement speaker or as an author of eloquent incitements to revolution. I formed a similar opinion when I saw Nehru over here, and I have been struck by the moderation and good sense of some at least of Nehru's public pronouncements on difficult political questions; notably, for example, his pronouncement in connection with the labour troubles at Kanpur some time ago. I think that it is quite likely that if Nehru was willing to consider the possibility he might make a very good Prime Minister and Kidwai as one of his colleagues we might see a line taken by the Government of the United Provinces which might do much to restore the position. Kidwai, I gather, would see no reason why the Press Act should not be made use of, particularly in such trouble as is created by the present antagonism between the Sunnis and the Shias. It is certainly something that Pant should have agreed to an immediate increase in the Police Force, and it may be that he is beginning to respond to public opinion, which I gather from what Haig says, is becoming tired of constant disturbances.... This seemed to make some impression upon him, but he concluded the conversation as he had begun it by stressing the fact that Gandhi was in these days the best friend amongst the Congress people of Great Britain, and that unless circumstances seriously altered his position he was still to be regarded as the main influence in India on the side of moderation and of co-operation with this country.

41. Against the Congress Ministries: Haig to Linlithgow, 10 May 1939

Haig Papers, Microfilm Roll No. 1, NMML

My dear Lord Linlithgow,

I am afraid I have taken some time to reply to your Excellency's letter, dated 13 April 1939, forwarding Sir Ziauddin Ahmad's¹ complaints against the Congress administrations in the UP, CP and Bihar. As these complaints ranged over such a wide field, I thought that it might be necessary to deal with them at considerable length. But when I came to look into them closely, I reached the conclusion that they do not really merit any very elaborate answer. The complaints which have been made under the head 'General' represent an indictment of the general policy and

administration of the Congress Ministry. While I am far from suggesting that there is not plenty of ground for criticism, and indeed many of these matters have caused me at various times and in varying degrees a great deal of anxiety, there is nothing specifically Muslim in all this. The general political criticism are the stock in trade of the opposition, voiced by non-Congress Hindus just as much as by Muslims, while my own anxieties connected with these matters have related to general administrative conditions and not to specifically Muslim problems. They are only represented as Muslim grievances because the Muslim community as a whole is in political opposition. I have dealt with all these matters so constantly in my fortnightly reports that I do not think you will wish me to attempt in this connection the task of a general review of the provincial administration. I will therefore confine myself to a very few remarks under the 'general' section.

The so-called 'dual system of administration' has in my opinion appreciably diminished since the early days when the Ministry first took office. I do not say that local Congressmen have not still more power and influence than is good for the administration, and are not in some districts a considerable nuisance. But they are beginning to be recognised as such by the Ministers. The real grievance of Muslims under this head is that they have no political pull. That is inevitable in present circumstances, and even if petty political jobbery was reduced to smaller proportions that exists at present Muslims would still feel that they were left out in the cold until they themselves formed part of the Government and could share in the little jobs. In any case they have not the same powerful and widespread organization in the districts as the Congress, and consequently are bound in the matter of exploiting real or unreal local grievances or personal cases to be at a disadvantage.

I come now to what are called the special complaints of Muslims and deal with them under their separate heads.

- (a) There have been troubles in the villages of landlords of all communities. I think it is true that in special cases the Congress have tried to stir up trouble in the villages of those landlords who are their prominent political opponents, and Muslims to a larger extent come under this category. But they are not attacked *qua* Muslims but *qua* opponents of the Congress. Thus Muslims landlords who choose to pay blackmail to the local Congressmen (and one of the largest of the Taluqdars undoubtedly does this) have little or no trouble from their tenants. But Hindu landlords suffer in exactly the same way. It is no doubt possible that in some cases the communal issue is raised as well as the ordinary issue of tenant versus landlord, but I think such cases are rare. On the whole however at present, apart from special circumstances, a sympathetic and reasonable landlord of whatever community can maintain not unsatisfactory relations with his tenants, though of course they are very different to what prevailed before the general elections.
- (b) & (c) These are the allegations that are made freely by the communalists on both sides, and considering the volume of the allegations, which incidentally pretty well cancel each other out, I think there is very little substance in them. The Hindu counterpart of Sir Ziauddin is to be found for instance in a long petition I received a week ago from the Hindu Sangh of Cawnpore, one sentence of which ran as follows: 'Sir, this is a historical fact that the Muslims are blessed with an aggressive mentality'. This kind of thing takes us nowhere. As for communal riots being started by Hindus, it was really aggressive action by Muslims which started the chain of events that led straight to the recent Cawnpore riots, and judged at any rate by casualties, the Muslims had decidedly an advantage over the Hindus. In Benares on the other hand the Hindus seem to have started the trouble. Sir Ziauddin refers to Marehra, a small town in the Etah district. There the ill-feeling seems to have started through a Congress flag pole having been bent by a tazia, perhaps

accidentally. The next stage was some brick throwing by Hindus on a tazia procession, and then the Muslim broke loose, killed several Hindus, looted their shops and desecrated a temple. Whatever the provocation, the Muslims were undoubtedly the aggressors in the riot. There are allegations that since the riot the Hindus have been taking revenge on the Muslims in the villages round about by cutting crops and damaging their property. There is probably some truth in this, but the matter has been receiving attention and punitive fines are being imposed. Incidentally the District Magistrate of this district is a Muslim. More serious in my opinion were the incidents which I mentioned in para 4 of my letter No. UP 237, dated 25 March 1939 in the Badaun district, where in a number of cases Hindu crowds collected and threatened or injured Muslims and their property in villages. On the other hand this supervened on trouble in the town of Badaun, when the Muslims had behaved aggressively. The fact is that in the present temper the community that feels itself strong is apt to be assertive. The Muslim strength is mainly in the towns. In the villages they are at a disadvantage.

- (d) The Pirpur Inquiry Report² devotes some space to this and has produced very little in the way of solid fact in its support as far as the UP is concerned.
- (e) There has been a lot of criticism that the Rural Development Scheme does too little in the way of practical work and too much in the way of propaganda. I am looking into these criticisms, which I am inclined to think are certainly a good deal exaggerated. According to an answer given in the Assembly on the 19 March 1938, out of 789 rural development organizers 20 per cent are Muslims. This is not a remarkably low percentage seeing that these men have to be taken from the rural classes and that the Muslim population in the province is so largely concentrated in the towns.
- (f) The general remarks under (b) and (c) apply to this. In the case, however, of the inquiries made by the Anti-Corruption Officer in the Police Department, which have given rise to much discontent and distrust, it was I think the case in the beginning that an unusually large proportion of Muslims were the target of these inquisitions. It was not so much that the officers who got into trouble did not have a reputation for corruption as that among a very large number of officers of this class—those who were selected for attack—were usually those who had made themselves obnoxious to the Congress, and these tended to be to a considerable extent Muslims. Direct communal feeling was also not absent. This feature however attracted attention and criticism, and I do not think it is true now to say as a rule that Muslim officers are specially attacked. But it is a matter that always requires attention.
- (g) In this province we have two Muslim Ministers¹ out of six, and had at the outset 3 Muslim Parliamentary Secretaries out of 13, though one of them has now resigned. The Deputy Speaker of the Legislative Assembly⁴ and the Deputy President of the Legislative Council⁵ are also Muslims, and one of the two Deputy Directors of Publicity is a Muslim. The Muslim Ministers are certainly not unmindful of Muslim interest, but they are distrusted by the majority of Muslims and denounced by the Muslim League.
- (h) This has been the subject of constant questions in the Legislature, and the facts elicited have not substantiated these charges as regards appointments under the Government.

4. In general I think it is correct to say that the provincial Ministry has done its best to be impartial in communal matters and with very fair success. Their good intentions have not however saved them from ceaseless attacks on communal grounds

¹ Ziauddin Ahmad (1878–1947); educated at the Aligarh College, Allahabad University and Trinity College, Cambridge (1901–03). He taught mathematics in Aligarh before he joined the loyalist forces on the campus to oppose the non-cooperation movement in Aligarh. As vice-chancellor of the university (1935–1947), he opposed nationalist activities and, in the 1940s encouraged the Muslim League to mobilize students and teachers. He was first elected to the UP legislative council in 1919.

² The Muslim League Council appointed a committee in March 1938 under the chairmanship of Raja Mohammad Mehdi of Pirpur to examine 'numerous representations and complaints' of 'the hardship, ill-treatment and injustice that is meted out to Musalmans in the various Congress Provinces'. The Committee submitted its report on 15 November 1939

³ The reference is to Rafi Ahmed Kidwai and Hafiz Mohammad Ibrahim.

⁴ Abdul Hakim (1891–1949); educated at Muir Central College, Allahabad; successful lawyer in Basti, from where he was elected to the UP legislative council in 1920 and to the assembly in 1937; he was the first deputy-speaker of the assembly; elected to the UP assembly after 1947 in a bye-election (in 1948) from Basti.

⁵ Qudsia Begum Ajaz Rasul (b. 1909) was elected to the UP legislative council in 1937 and was elected its deputy-President in the legislature in 1939; member of the Constituent Assembly (1947–50); after independence, she was closely associated with the UP government, with educational institutions and with the All India Women's Conference.

42. The Calcutta Municipal Amendment Bill

Indian Annual Register, Vol. I, pp. 172–175, Vol. II, p. 109

22 May–29 June 1939

The Calcutta Municipal Amendment Bill came up for consideration on the 22nd May. Dr R.K. Mukherjee made a stringent criticism of the Bill while moving an amendment that the Bill be circulated for the purpose of eliciting opinion thereon by the 30 June 1939. 'It is part of a larger scheme to reduce the power of the Hindus all over India because the Hindus and specially the Bengal Hindus have been the foremost in the fight for the freedom of their country. But was politics a mere matter of counting of heads', asked Dr Mukherjee, 'and of infant heads'? The great Moslem majority of 55 per cent dwindled into 25 per cent as tax payers and further shrank into 12 per cent in the sphere of higher education and into similar positions of minority in the sphere of independent professions, legal, medical or commercial. An important phase of world-politics was fought out on the principle of 'No representation, no taxation' and led to the emergence of the United States of America. 'If the Bengal Hindus were kept out of their representation in proportion to taxation, a separation of Hindu Bengal from Moslem Bengal might be inevitable. If the Moslems must separate from Hindus at elections and sit separately in the legislature, let them separate in education and other matters, let them part with their purses'. Next day, the 23rd May, opposing the Hon. Mr Nalini Ranjan Sarker's motion that the Bill be taken into consideration, Mr Lalit Chandra Das (Congress) launched a severe attack on the provisions of the Bill. Mr Das said that the principle underlying the Bill was obnoxious and there was no justification. He pointed out that the facts and figures given on the previous day by the Hon. Sir Nazimuddin were wholly misleading. Mr H.C.A. Hunter, Leader of the European Group, maintained that the system of separate electorates would not have the bad results predicted about it. On the contrary, it should tend to eliminate communal strife. The European Group agreed that consideration should be given to the important factors of numerical strength and financial contributions, but they also held the view that any considerable party majority in the Corporation was an evil and that only by the abolition of that considerable majority could the welfare of the city be properly safeguarded. Their group

supported the motion. Mr Hamidul Huq Chaudhary, Deputy President of the Council, criticised the attitude which the Hindus had taken up with regard to this measure and said that the Hindus looked at the Bill with a prejudiced mind and did not try to realise the attitude of the Muslims. Khan Bahadur Abdul Karim, Leader of the Coalition Group, said that he did not like separate electorates but he felt that there was a necessity for Muslims for working separately at present. Prof. Humayun Kabir (Krishak Praja) criticised the line of argument of Khan Bahadur Abdul Karim that separate electorates were bad and yet it should be worked, and maintained that it was in its interests that British imperialism set up one community against another. Affairs in the country at present were most deplorable, but the only solution of that problem was the creation of an atmosphere in which the two communities might realise the stupidity of their action in standing separate from each other. He maintained that their salvation lay in the unity of interests of Hindus and Muslims. Continuing his speech on the next day, the 24th May, Prof. Kabir reiterated his opinion that separate electorate afforded no protection to the minority community and pleaded for the acceptance of his formula, which provided for joint electorates with the condition that every successful candidate should secure at least twenty five per cent of the votes cast both by the Hindus and Muslims. Prof. Humayan Kabir said that it was the first duty of the Government to do everything which promoted good relationship between the different communities. He appealed to the Chief Minister, the head of the Government, not to do anything which might accentuate the differences existing between the two great communities. Intervening in the debate, the Chief Minister, Mr A.K. Fazlul Huq, said that he had never put himself forward as a Congress candidate. But some years back, while one party in the Congress supported the candidature of his rival, he thought it was open to him to get the support of the other section. There was no need for him to sign any Congress creed, because at that time he was already a member of the Congress (ironical cheers from the Opposition). He had been so for more than twenty-five years. But later he severed his connection with the Congress along with Mr Jinnah, the late Mr Mahomed Ali, the late Mr Shaukat Ali and others because 'they were thoroughly convinced that the Congress was indulging in communalism of the worst kind'. (Cries of 'question', from the Congress benches). The Chief Minister said that under the present circumstances in India, separate electorates for the various communities were the only solution. At the present moment, he remarked, the opinions of different communities were so sharply divided, and prejudices were so strong in the mind of one community against another, that there could be no alternative to separate electorates. He asserted that the Bill might not be acceptable to Calcutta Hindus, but it was acceptable to Hindus outside Calcutta. Regarding threats of civil disobedience, he said that if any unconstitutional agitation was started, they would know how to meet the situation. He declared that the Congress administration of the affairs of the Corporation had been most lamentable, and the time had come to set matters right. At this stage, there were interruptions from the Opposition and the Chief Minister flared up and said: 'We want to turn the Congress out'. Next day, the 25th May, the House agreed to take the Bill into consideration on the motion of the Hon. Mr Nalini Ranjan Sarkar. Dr Radhb Kumud Mukherjee's amendment that the Bill be circulated for the purpose of eliciting opinion thereon was rejected without a division. Altogether six speakers participated in the debate, including two Ministers, Mr H.S. Suhrawardy and Mr Nalini Ranjan Sarkar. Mr Sarkar said that he personally felt that a just treatment had not been meted out to the Hindus. He said that by giving the Hindus three more elected seats it would be possible to pacify the resentment expressed by the Hindus throughout the province, if not to satisfy all sections of them. This could be done without in any way affecting the strength of representatives of the Muslim community in the House. Referring to the demand for the resignation of the Caste-Hindu Ministers, Mr Sarkar said that he did not consider that the stage had come when the extreme steps of resignation should

be taken. The provisions of the Bill were severely criticised by Khan Bahadur Sheikh Mohamed Jan of the Coalition Party. He sounded a note of warning to the Government against the danger of the introduction of separate electorates with regard to the Calcutta Corporation. He stressed the necessity of satisfying the demands of the Hindus giving them two or three additional seats. Mr Ranjit Pal Choudhury (Congress), welcomed the 'threat of retaliation' held out by the Chief Minister on the previous day, because such a threat would compel the disintegrated Hindus to combine for the sake of self-preservation. The Bill was taken up for consideration clause by another defeat by 21 to 20 votes on the amendment moved by Khan Sahib Abdul Hamid Choudhury (Coalition). By this amendment the Khan Sahib sought to reduce the number of 8 nominated seats to 4 as provided in sub-clause 2 of clause 3 of the Bill, in the proposed clause (b). The Krishak-Proja Party, the Congress Party, the Progressive Party and the mover (Coalition) voted for the motion. The House then adjourned and re-assembled on the 14th June and resuming consideration of the Bill, dealt with only one non-official amendment seeking to introduce certain principles on which the Government should fill up the four nominated seats in the Corporation. The amendment was, however, lost. Next day, the 15th June, a strong reproof that no member of the House, whether a Minister or anybody else, should interrupt another member who did not give way, was administered by the hon. Mr S.C. Mitra, President when Prof. Humayun Kabir was interrupted by Mr H.S. Suhrawardy, Minister for Labour. Discussion on the Bill was then continued. Five non-official amendments were moved to the clause regarding nomination, but all of them were rejected. The House then adjourned till the 20th June when, by 35 votes against 15, it rejected an amendment of Prof. Humayan Kabir, which wanted to retain the system of joint electorate under certain conditions. The amendment provided that a Hindu or a Mohamedan candidate, in order to be declared duly elected, must secure not less than 25 per cent of the votes cast by voters of his own community and not less than 10 per cent of the votes cast by voters of the other community. Prof. Kabir claimed that if his formula was accepted by the House it would go a long way towards solving the communal problem that had assumed such alarming proportions to-day. Under the existing Calcutta Municipal Act, there were joint electorates for the Mahomedans. If his amendment was carried then they would have joint electorates for the whole of Calcutta and would at the same time have necessary protection for the minority communities. It was desirable, the speaker emphasized, that only such persons should be returned who enjoyed the confidence of all the communities. Khan Bahadur Saiyed Muzzamuddin Hosain (Coalition) and the hon. Mr Tamizuddin Khan, Minister for Local Self-Government, opposed the amendment. Next-day, the 21st June, the Council dealt with four non-official amendments to Clause III of the Bill relating to the system of nomination. All the four amendments which sought to make an allotment of the four seats available, as a result of the acceptance by the House of Khan Saheb Abdul Hamid Chaudhary's amendment, reducing the number of nominated seats from eight to four, were negatived. The first amendment moved by Khan Saheb Abdul Hamid Chaudhary, which sought to give three of these four seats to the Scheduled Castes to be reserved for them in the general constituency and one seat to the Mahomedans was negatived by 31 against 25 votes. The Congress party, the Progressive Party, the Krishak Praja Party and one nominated member voted in support of the amendment, while the Coalition Party and the European Group voted against it. The three other amendments moved by Mr K.K. Dutt, Mr R. Paul Choudhary and Mr L.C. Das were lost without a division. Next Day, the 22nd June, barring the change that the clause has undergone following the acceptance of Khan Sahib Abdul Hamid Chaudhary's amendment, all other non-official amendments to the clause were negatived. An attempt on the part of non-official amendments to the clause were negatived. An attempt on the part of non-official members to make an allotment of the four seats released out of the nominated bloc failed and the Clause was passed with the only modification

relating to the number of nominated seats. An amendment moved by Prof. Humayun Kabir, seeking to raise the number of elected seats from 85 to 99, was lost without a division. By another amendment to Clause V of the bill, Prof. Kabir wanted to do away with the provision for separate electorates and increase the number of Muslim voters. Prof. Kabir thought that any Muslim paying rent should be treated as a voter. He also emphasized that adult franchise should be introduced as that would increase the number of Muslim voters in the city. Replying P.C. Senng, the hon. Khwaja Sir Nazimuddin, Home Minister, said that there could be no question of adult franchise for local bodies. Specially municipalities where the whole principle was based on the fact that those who paid for the upkeep of the city should have a say in the matter of the administration of the affairs of the city. He said that the Government proposed to deal with the question of lowering the franchise and with the object in view they proposed to introduce a Bill very shortly and when the franchise was lowered the number of votes would become more. Prof. Kabir's amendment was negatived by 35 against 12 votes. Mr Lalit Chandra Das also moved an amendment seeking to select the provision for separate electorates. The amendment was lost without a division. Prof. Kabir by another amendment wanted to add a new provision to Clause V that every woman shall be qualified as an elector of the woman's constituencies and every Indian Christian shall be qualified as an elector of the Indian Christian constituencies. The amendment was rejected. Clause V of the Bill was still under consideration when the House adjourned till the next day, the 23rd June, when opposition amendments urging representation of Indian commercial interests on the Calcutta Corporation were rejected. Clause 5 of the Bill, laying down qualifications for franchise, was thereupon passed with only a verbal modification. Prof. Humayun Kabir (Krishak Proja) severely criticised the Ministry for ignoring the legitimate claims of Indian commercial interests in the City to be represented on the Calcutta Corporation. He pointed out that the European community had got more seats in the Corporation than they were entitled to get, the amendment was pressed to a division and negatived by 33 against 14 votes. Mr Naresh Nath Mukherji of the Congress Party also moved an amendment pressing the claims of the Bengal National Chamber of Commerce, the Muslim Chamber of Commerce and the Indian Chamber of Commerce for representation in the Calcutta Corporation. Mr Scott Kerr (European) opposing the amendment repudiated the suggestion that the Europeans had a larger representation than what they were entitled to get. He said that the Europeans paid 15 per cent of the consolidated rates and also paid, in addition to that, licence fees on trades etc. estimated at 12 lakhs of rupees per annum. A decrease in the representation of the European community would not only be unsatisfactory but also be unjustified. Mr Mukherji's amendment was lost without a division. Clause 6 of the Bill laying down the qualification for election as Councilor was under consideration when the House adjourned till the 27th June, when the third reading of the Bill commenced. Previous to this, the second reading was passed. The only amendment moved by Rai Manmatha Nath Bose Bahadur, to increase the number of representation from one to two of the Ward No.... relating to Tollygunj, by reducing the number of representation from 2 to one of the Ward No. 31 relating to Satpukur, was put to division and lost. The other amendments were not moved at all, many of which were out of order. Next day, the 28th June, the Council passed the Bill without division. The only change effected was the reduction in the number of nominated seats from eight to four. The Bill now goes to the Lower House again for its reconsideration in the amended form. The House then adjourned to meet again on the 7th July.

There was a very large attendance of members when the Bengal Legislative Assembly reassembled at Calcutta on the 6 July 1939 after a week's recess to deal with the two amendments made by the Upper House to the Calcutta municipal Amendment Bill. On the motion of the Nawab Bahadur of Dacca, Minister for Local Self-Government, who had piloted the Bill in the

Assembly, the House agreed to take into consideration the amendments made to the Bill by the Upper House. Mr Charles Griffiths (Anglo-Indian) moved an amendment suggesting that eight councilors of the Calcutta Corporation be appointed by the Provincial Government, of whom three shall be members of the scheduled caste community and one an Anglo-Indian. The Bill, as passed by the Assembly, provided that eight councilors of the Corporation shall be appointed by the Government of whom three shall be members of the scheduled caste community. The Upper House, by an amendment, had suggested that the number of councilors to be appointed by the Government be reduced from eight to four and that the provision for reserving three seats to be filled by nomination by the Government from members of the scheduled caste community be dropped. The debate on Mr Charles Griffiths and other amendments was continued on the next day, the 7th July when more than forty-eighty amendments to the change made by the Upper House in the Bill reducing the number of nominated seats from eight to four, were moved by the Opposition. On behalf of the Government, the Hon. Nawab Bahadur of Dacca, Minister for Local Self-Government, moved an amendment seeking to restore the original provision of the Bill, namely, that eight councilors shall be appointed by the Government, three of whom shall be members of the Scheduled Caste Community. The Opposition proposed various ways as to how the four nominated seats, as suggested by the Council, should be distributed, and urged further reduction in the number of nominated seats. Opposition speakers launched a vigorous attack on the system of nomination to Municipal and local bodies. The amendments were under consideration when the Assembly adjourned till Monday the 10th July when, on the motion of the Nawab Bahadur of Dacca, Minister for Local Self-Government, it rejected the amendment made by the Upper House to the Bill, and stuck to its previous decision. In the Bill, as passed by the Assembly, it was provided that the Government shall nominate eight councilors of the Calcutta Corporation, of whom three shall be members of the Scheduled Caste community. The Upper House, by an amendment, had reduced the number of councilors to be nominated by the Government from eight to four, and had also done away with the provision reserving three of the nominated seats for the Scheduled Caste community. A Krishak Proja party amendment seeking to reduce the number of nominated members to two—one Hindu and one Muslim—was rejected by 116 to 64 votes. An amendment moved by a Scheduled Caste member of the Congress party, urging that of the four members to be nominated by the Government as suggested by the Upper House three shall be members of the Scheduled Caste community, was rejected by 116 to 76 votes. This decision of the Assembly was communicated to the Upper House, which met on the next day.

43. On Dr Zia Uddin's¹ Complaints: Linlithgow to Haig, 26 May 1939

Haig Papers, Acc. No. 2068, NAI

[Extracts]

5. I sent Zetland a copy of your very interesting letter on Zia Uddin's complaints about the treatment of the Muslims. I may hear further from him on this, and if I do, I will let you know. He has, however, in a recent private letter put to me certain specific proposals as regards the Muslims. He remarks (and your report so far as the United Provinces goes bear this out) that he has never been able to find specific instances of the hardships inflicted on minority communities, in Congress Provinces, but that the suggestion was made to him that the real trouble is in the matter of jobs—that 'tame' Muslims get all the appointments secured to the community by the fixed quotas, and that it can easily be understood that this will be more infuriating to the 'good Muslim' than the appointment of a Hindu: while on the other hand, the more belligerent is the Muslim community, the greater would be the temptation of the Government to put in 'tame' Muslims. He asked me

whether I thought it would strengthen the hands of the Governors concerned, including yourself in the United Provinces, were I to authorize a message from the Governor General about the dangers of stimulating communal danger by inequitable distribution of appointments which would make it clear that I would not regard myself as estopped from using my responsibility for minorities by the fact that particular sections of a minority had no cause for complaint: and he has suggested that if Ministers should appeal to Gandhi against a sermon of this kind, it seemed unlikely that they would get much support from him, the indications being that the Mahatma was becoming more and more apprehensive about the rising tide of communal antagonism.

6. I told Zetland in reply that I would readily consult you and the other Governors concerned on Zia Uddin's proposal; but that my first reaction was one of doubt. For I thought that the Governors concerned were already fully alive to the position and could be relied on when they thought they could in fact intervene to any purpose, to do so: and I added that I was myself skeptical as to whether the added weight of the Governor-General's name, unless he was in a position to bring some really effective pressure of his own to bear, would make much difference, while I was not anxious to come in or to threaten in a matter of this character unless I could be quite sure that by doing so I could produce some effect; and that I should be ready to go through at whatever cost with whatever threats I might use. I must say that on thinking over the matter more at leisure I remain very much of my original point of view. But I am only too ready to recognise that I may be regarding the matter from too narrow a stand point. So far as appointments go I got the impression from your report on Zia Uddin's complaints that you were generally satisfied—though that may only be on distribution as between Hindu and Muslim and not as between 'good' and 'tame' Muslims; and I should very greatly welcome your frame advice. I will make a similar request of the other Governors most concerned.

Sir Ziauddin Ahmed (1878–1947): Born at Meerut; began his education in a madarsa and graduated from MAO College, joined MAO College as mathematics teacher but later proceeded to Cambridge for Honours degree in Trinity College. He was a member of Mathematical Society of London and Fellow of the Royal Astronomical Society. In 1904, he got Ph.D. from Göttingen and returned to India to take his job at MAO.

In 1919, he became the Principal of the College and during Khilafat, he tactfully averted crisis with nationalists and Khilafists who wanted to convert the college into national university. He was appointed Pro Vice-Chancellor when the college turned into University in 1920 and later was appointed Vice-Chancellor in 1935 which he held till 1947. In December, same year he died in London.

He was member of Central Legislative Assembly and was elected to House in 1930 as independent but later associated with Muslim League; wrote many books like *Systems of Education*, *Systems of Examination* and *Indian Railways*.

44. Muslims and Appointments

Haig to Linlithgow, 3 June 1939, Haig Papers, Acc. No. 2068, NAI

My dear Lord Linlithgow,

In paras 5 and 6 of Your Excellency's letter, dated 26 May 1939, you asked my views about the Secretary of State's suggestion that the Governor General should issue a Statement directed to reassuring the Muslims that Government appointments would not go unduly to Congress or 'tame' Muslims, but that the non-Congress or 'good' Muslims should receive their fair share of what was going. I do not myself think that in the sense in which the Secretary of State views the matter there is really any problem or injustice. Appointments of any importance are made on the advice of the Public Service Commission. The main function of the Ministry in this connection is to decide how many Muslims should be appointed—a matter on which I can see that decisions are reasonable. The Public Service Commission are then asked to recommend the names of say five Muslims for

a particular service. These men are selected by the Public Service Commission entirely on their merits. There is no question of their being 'tame' or 'good', and the Ministry would be in no position to put forward names of their own in consideration of the fact that they were connected with their supporters.

2. Theoretically in the lower grades of Government service, such as clerks in district offices, which are not recruited through the Public Service Commission, the Ministers could bring pressure to bear of the kind which the Secretary of State envisages. But in practice they would not do anything of the kind, and I do not think there is any reason to suppose that Collectors and other officers who have the appointment of these lower grade Government servants would be influenced in favour of Congress as against non-Congress Muslims. There may have been some reason for complaint in connection with the appointment of rural development organizers. This however was a very special case, in which appointments (not only of Muslims) were admittedly made on improper principles, and new appointments have now been put on a proper footing.

3. Any grievance that the Muslim community may have in this matter is not I think as regards actual appointments to Government service, but consists rather in what I have described in my letter No. UP 258 dated 10 May 1939, about Sir Ziauddin Ahmad's complaints as to the absence of political pull, particularly in local matters. It is probably the case, for instance, that in the selection of honorary magistrates the 'tame' Muslims may have an advantage over the 'good' ones, but that is not a matter in which it seems to me to be possible for the Governor to interfere.

4. The primary grievance of the majority party among the Muslims in my opinion is not that they do not get their fair share of Government appointments, but that they have no part or lot in the Ministry. I do not remember public complaints that the right type of Muslims are not getting Government appointments. But Muslim League platforms have rung with accusations that the Governors have neglected the duty placed on them by their Ministries' 'tame' Muslims instead of 'good' ones.

5. About three weeks ago I drafted a letter to you discussing the whole situation from the point of view of the composition of the Ministries and making some tentative suggestions for the future. I was doubtful however whether this would be of much practical value to you, and I consequently put it on one side. But as it is clear that you and the Secretary of State are closely considering the whole problem of the attitude of Muslims, I think it is worth while to send a copy of this draft letter which accordingly I enclose. Though it does not deal with the problem of appointments, it does discuss the problem whether the Muslims can be regarded as represented by Congress Muslims, which really underlies the present reference of the Secretary of State, and I think it has a good deal of relevance to the general issues which are perplexing us.

6. As you will have gathered from what I have said above. I think that the problem of recruiting particular types of Muslims for Government service is not one which is giving rise to any difficulty, and consequently that there will be no advantage in making a pronouncement about it.

Yours sincerely,

45. Assam Congress Coalition Ministry at Work,
September 1938—May 1939

AICC Papers, File No. G-53, 1939-40, NMML. This report was compiled by S.R. Dutt, Secretary of the Congress Coalition Party in Assam.

The Finance Minister's Budget speech for 1939-40 will give an indication of the Ministry's plans and projects for the current year in the various spheres of activity. It will be seen that the programme

envisaged in the speech includes proposals for increasing the revenue of the State by a scheme of taxation. The following taxation proposals have been adopted:

- (a) a tax on agricultural income;
- (b) a tax on petrol and lubricant oil;
- (c) a tax on amusement and betting;
- (d) a sales tax on motor cars and bicycles, foreign liquor and other articles of luxury;
- (e) an increase of the tax on private motor cars from Rs 25 to Rs 30 by amending the Motor Vehicles Act.

The principle underlying these taxation proposals, as might be seen, is to tax people who afford to pay and also those who would spend unnecessarily on amusements and luxuries. With the exception of the Agricultural Income-tax Bill which was rejected in the Second Chamber by 11 votes to 9, the rest of the Bills have been passed.

It is necessary to comment here in passing on the likely effect of the proposed tax on agricultural income on certain vested interests in the province. It may be known that the burden of taxation, particularly in the Assam valley proper, is being borne principally by the poor cultivators of the soil. The incidence of taxation per 'bigha' varies in the districts from 15 as to 12 as. Whereas in areas where tea cultivation takes place it is not more than 6 as. per 'bigha'. The Zamindari tracts are of course governed by the Permanent settlement and the incidence of taxation on land realizable from the Zamindars must be in the nature of things infinite similarly small. The result is that nearly half the cost of the Provincial Government is borne by the poor ryots.

The Agricultural Income-tax Bill was brought in order to distribute the burden of taxation as equitably as it is possible under the present scheme of things. The minimum taxable limit has been fixed at Rs 3000 of net profit and this, in the opinion of the ministry, would not touch the actual cultivating class at all.

It is a happy feature for us to note that the Indian Zamindars and planters belonging to our party have supported the Bill in spite of the fact that the proposed levy would fall rather heavily on them. While the European tea planters who professed sympathy for the principles of the Bill, started their opposition in the very first stages of the legislation. The Muslim League and a few reactionary Hindus joined them and manipulated the opposition evidently with no other motive than to defeat the Congress Coalition Government.

Their attempt signally failed in the Lower House where the Government carried every motion with a steady majority. In the Upper Chamber, however, where the Government no definite party 'bloc', the Bill was lost through the opposition of tea planters and reactionaries and without consideration of any amendment. The fate of the Bill now depends on a joint session of the two Houses which will be convened early.

The budget, it will be seen, anticipates a deficit of 17 lakhs. These taxation measures might well have brought a revenue of nearly 30 lakhs to the coffers of the State and after meeting the deficit, Government would have had a surplus of 13 lakhs which might have been utilised in giving some relief to the overburdened taxpayer as well as constructive work.

The Budget itself, it will be observed, is bold and forward in many respects. It contemplates the consideration of the wants of the people and their remedies and the finding out of the money by means of taxation to meet the same. The deficit shown covers constructive work on the following lines:

- (a) The opium Prohibition Scheme entailing a deficit of more than 6 lakhs including the surrender of receipts and expenditure on the prohibition campaign;

- (b) Addition expenditure of 2 lakhs and 80 thousands on education. This covers not only the usual expenditure which is natural for the expansion of education but also includes an expenditure of 1 lakh 50 thousand on the following heads:-
- (i) A scheme for the spread of education amongst the tribal people, scheduled classes and ex-tea garden labourers, involving an expenditure of Rs 50,000 of which Shri G.D. Birla has kindly donated Rs 10,000 for five years;
 - (ii) Expenditure of another Rs 50,000 for the expansion of primary education;
 - (iii) A scheme for the removal of mass illiteracy for which Rs 35,000 has been allotted.

Government has also allotted minor sums for experimenting on the Wardha Scheme of Education and the teaching of Hindusthani in all Government schools. The deficit also covers expenditure on the improvement of the agriculture and veterinary departments involving a sum of Rs 30,000 and on industrial improvement. The rest of the deficit is accounted for by the expenditure from 7 to 8 lakhs for giving relief to the suffering and distressed during the last 1938 floods. A recurring deficit of nearly 2½ lakhs is also there.

Other Legislative Measures

The Ministry have taken up other legislative business in hand with a view to bringing about an adjustment of interests between tenants and Zamindars. Two pieces of legislation to amend the existing tenancy acts of Goalpara and Sylhet were introduced in the last Assembly session and referred to a Select Committee in each case. We have also the Ministers salaries Bill passed in accordance with the Congress principle of pay allowances. This Bill has since passed through both Houses and has received the Governor's assent. With a view to carrying out effectively the scheme of prohibition in particular areas, a Prohibition Bill has been passed in the Upper Chamber but it has yet to be got through the Lower Chamber before it can go for the Governor's assent.

Two other legislations could not be taken up for want of time: the Speaker's and Deputy Speaker's Salaries Bill and the Drainage and Embankment Bill. The latter piece of legislation aims at benefiting the cultivators by either draining out surplus water from water-logged areas or irrigating those areas where there is scarcity of water.

Forfeited Pensions

Government have restored forfeited pensions to (i) Dr H.K. Das, Retd Civil Surgeon and (ii) S. K.K. Bhattacharya and passed orders for the restoration of services in 2 or 3 cases; but on account of administrative difficulties they have not been able to offer service to them. Government offered service to 7 out of the 10 political prisoners convicted of violence who were released but only have so far accepted service.

Concessions to Villagers

Important concessions have been made to the Forest Villagers and the people living in Forests areas. The number of days of which free labour is to be rendered by the forest villagers has been reduced from 10 to 5 without any corresponding reduction in the quantity of forest produce that they are allowed to remove free of royalty under the rules. This concession will involve the Government in a loss of quarter of a lakh.

The villagers in the flood affected areas in the Sibsagar and Lakhimpur districts were allowed free grant of reserve trees from unclassified State forests for the construction of dug-outs. The Miris of the Lakhimpur district were allowed during the last floods to sell firewood free of royalty. They were also allowed to cut reserved timber free of royalty for building their houses.

Jail Reforms

A number of old, infirm and juvenile prisoners have been released before the expiry of their terms of imprisonment. Government is further considering a scheme of releasing prisoners on probation under the Good Conduct Prisoners Probational Release Act of 1938 and employ them on Government Farms or settle them on Government lands. Moreover, a comprehensive scheme of jail reforms is under the consideration of the Government.

Partially Excluded Areas

Government have appointed a committee to study the problems of the people in the "Partially Excluded Areas" and suggest ways and means to remove their disabilities and bring them under the general administration. Government held a Conference in the third week of May 1939 to have a discussion on these problems.

Tea Garden Unrest

In view of recent strikes and other manifestation of discontent on certain tea gardens in the province, Government have just appointed a Tea Garden Labour Enquiry Committee to determine the causes, economic or otherwise, of strikes and suggest measures for their removal and also to determine what form of organisation is desirable for the settlement of disputes between employers and employed.

Digboi Strike

Nearly 10,000 Indian employees of the Assam Oil Company at Digboi are on strike since 3rd April last. Attempts at a peaceful settlement of the dispute have been of no avail and Government's proposal for setting up conciliation or arbitration board has fallen through. Remedies provided in the Indian Trade Disputes Act have been tried but with no effect. As matters stand today, Government intervention can go no farther.

There was a firing incident on the night of 18th April resulting in the death of 3 and injuries to several employees. The findings of the magisterial enquiry go to show that the military police faced by a hostile mob of several hundreds resorted to firing and killed three people in self-defence.

In view of certain defects in the enquiry and the intense public feeling over the whole affair, Government propose to institute an independent enquiry.

Opium Prohibition Campaign

With a view to the eradication of the opium habit, the Congress Coalition Government formulated a scheme to achieve that end within two years by completely prohibiting the use of the drug in Sibsagar and Dibrugarh Sub-divisions and accelerating the reduction of opium rations of addicts in the remaining districts.

Government inaugurated the anti-opium campaign on 16th April last. Nearly 70 per cent of the addicts have already been weaned and not a single death has occurred on account of the withdrawal of opium. The results of the first month have been most satisfactory and warrant the belief that the campaign will be an unqualified success. If smuggling can be effectively checked, the opium habit will be a thing of the past in the province by the end of 1940.

The earnest cooperation of the Congress committees and the public and the college and school students on vocation, no less than the faithful discharge of their duties by the Government servants, has contributed largely to the success achieved so far.

46. Communalism in services

Editorial, *Tribune*, 16 June 1939

16 June 1939

The Bengal Premier was evidently in a chastened mood while making his statement in connection with his Government's decision on the services ratio question.¹ Instead of roaring as a lion he almost cooed as a dove. The Government's decision, he said, had been arrived at after much deep and anxious deliberation and with the utmost possible consideration for the various interests affected, and he appealed to the Hindu Community to take a calm and dispassionate view of the whole question. Posts in Government services, he added, constituted only a small fraction of the various careers open to Hindu youths in non-Government and semi-Government offices. Even their share of appointments in Government services would be but slightly affected by the formula. He, therefore, appealed to the youths of all non-Muslim communities to be generous to their Muslim countrymen, and give the youths of that community a chance of taking their proper share in the administration. One good turn deserves another, and an appeal for calm and dispassionate consideration of a question on one side can best be met by a similar appeal on the other. For our part we have always considered any attitude except that of calm dispassionateness not only singularly out of place in dealing with a matter of such importance, but gravely prejudicial to the best interests of the country, for it can have no other effect except that of widening the gulf that already divides the communities and intensifying their mutual bitterness. But calm and dispassionate consideration of a question does not mean either a consideration that is one-sided or one in which all aspects of the question except those that lie on the surface are ignored or minimized. We are constrained to say that this is the only kind of consideration that Mr Haq's Government have so far given to the matter.

From the communal point of view the decision is open to the grave objection that what is given to the non-Muslims with one hand is practically taken away with the other. The so-called 'parity of appointments' becomes an empty phrase as a result of the provision that 'further reservation are to be made for the Muslim community to counteract the effect of promotions'. As Mr N.K. Bose, one of the members of the Hindu deputation that recently waited on the Governor² in this connection points out, 'It really means that for a long time all or most of the appointments are to be made from amongst the Muslims'. To ask the non-Muslims, in the name of generosity, to agree to an arrangement like this is to ask them to impose upon themselves a self-denying ordinance which no community or class in any country has ever been ready to impose upon itself in a similar matter. One can understand an appeal for generosity when the demands of justice have been substantially met, but to make an appeal to a community or class in the name of generosity, to practice self-abnegation like this is to expect more from human nature than human nature is capable of yielding, and we cannot but share the belief of Mr Bose that the Hindus of Bengal will not take the decision lying down, but will fight it energetically with all the constitutional weapons at their disposal.

But the communal aspects of the decision, important as it undoubtedly is from the point of view of justice and equity, is its least important aspect. The most important interests involved in the decisions are those of democracy, of nationality and of the efficiency of the public services, all of which affect the province as a whole. The first two are more or less completely ignored both by Mr Haq in his appeal and by the Bengal Government in their communiqué explaining and defending their decision. They seem hardly to be conscious of their existence. The authors of the Montford report, writing on the analogous subject of separate communal representation on the legislatures, said that 'division by creeds and classes meant the creation of political camps organised

against each other and teaches men to think as partisans and not as citizens,' and added that 'it was difficult to see how the change from the system of communal representation in the Services to national representation is ever to occur. Mr Haq is anxious that the non-Muslims should give a chance to the Muslim community. Does it occur to him that he and his colleagues are here giving no change whatever to the principles of nationality and democracy to establish their ascendancy or, indeed, even to have a footing in the province? The old system of competition-cum-nomination for certain Services had this distinct advantage that the topmost posts being thrown open to competition were filled solely on the basis of merit, that is, by the most qualified candidates without distinction of classes or community, the power of nomination being ostensibly used only to redress communal or other inequalities. In the present system not one per cent of the posts, not even a fraction of one per cent, is reserved for pure merit, that is for the best qualified citizens as such. One must be either a Muslim or a non-Muslim to secure an appointment. If this is not seeking to kill nationalism and democracy by preventing the growth of national and democratic consciousness, we do not know what it is.

As regards efficiency, the Bengal Government's decision does not completely ignore its claims, as it does ignore the claims of both nationality and democracy, but it obviously subordinates them to communal claims. It is impossible to reserve so large a percentage of posts in every Service for members of one single community without ignoring the possibly superior claims of members of other communities. Nor is this all. Efficiency in a public Servant is not an abstract or isolated quality; it is the sum total of all the concrete qualities that make a successful administration or subordinate official. Of these qualities one of the most vitally important in a country of many religions and religious communities like India is complete freedom from religious or communal bias in the discharge of one's official duties. The worst thing about communal representation in the Services is that it prevents the members of a Services from developing this essential and indispensable quality. Every person who is recruited to a Service on a communal basis knows that he owes his appointment pre-eminently to the fact of his being a Muslim or non-Muslim, and that knowledge is bound to create a conscious or unconscious bias in his mind for all time in favour of his own community and against rival communities. The worthier members of the Services may by rigid self-discipline overcome the effects of conscious bias, but they may not possibly hope to do so, and even the few who can are seldom completely successful in getting rid of their unconscious bias. The result is that the large majority of members of the Services are not able to claim that rigid impartiality as between one class or community and another which ought to be the easiest and most natural thing to a public servant and without which no Government, and certainly no popular Government, can ever work successfully. A Government whose servants think of themselves primarily and principally not as citizens but as Hindus, or Muslims, or Christians is, indeed, a Government that is doomed to utter and irretrievable failure. This is the most serious defect of all systems of communal representation in the Services, and of this defect Mr Haq and his Government seem to be supremely unconscious.

¹ On 12 June, a Bengal Government Communiqué announced the decision of the Bengal Ministry on the question of revision of the communal ratio in the Public Services, reserving 50% seats for Muslims; 15% direct recruitment reserved for Scheduled Castes.

² R.N. Reid assumed charge as Governor of Bengal on 24 February after the death of Lord Brouncker.

47. Congressmen in office: Ministers or Tyrants?

Leader, 10 July 1939

10 July 1939

B.G. Horniman's¹ paper, the *Bombay Sentinel*, writes in the course of a leading article headed 'Ministers or Tyrants':

Following the events of the last few weeks, it is being realised by the Congress high command that a large number of Congress Committee members are opposed to the official policy of the Congress, and there is a tendency to rebel against recent decisions.

While it is agreed that the resolutions of the Congress, once they are passed by that body, must loyally be given effect to, it has to be remembered that at the last meeting of the AICC the Congress high command went out of its way to ban even Satyagraha, a sacred Gandhian Congress doctrine and the only peaceful weapon left to the protestants against the Congress policy.

It is impossible that a very large section of Congressmen can be silenced forever by this new fiat. Room for some sort of protest and self-expression must be left in every organisation, and the right to resort to satyagraha is the Congressman's 'magna carta'.

We are, fortunately, not living in a Nazi country for the present, and there must be some latitude for those who cannot see eye to eye with a rigid Congress majority.

In one of his speeches, the Premier of Bihar² and Orissa³ complained of the efforts made at the Ambara village library anniversary, to prevent the meeting at which the Congress president was to speak. The attempts failed and Rajendra Prasad⁴ complained of the lack of discipline and want of cooperation between the Ministries and the general body of Congressmen.

Cooperation, it must be remembered, cannot be one-sided and must be mutual, and unless the Congress Ministries themselves can offer their cooperation it is impossible for the other side to help or cooperate with them.

Nobody wants the Ministries to do the impossible, but if they cannot even do all that is possible, there cannot be much room left for cooperation and confidence.

In Madras a Congress MLA and a member of the AICC was bound over for one year under section 112 of the Criminal Procedure Code for his Labour activities and for criticizing the Madras Ministry for their reactionary policy.

Other members of the AICC have since been arrested for picketing in Madras, and no doubt C. Rajagopalachari will see that they are properly disposed of before long.⁵

One wonders how long Congressmen are to tolerate this sort of tyranny and oppression by Congress Ministers, who are supposed to be working provincial autonomy to do some slight good to the masses.

At this rate, it would be wrong to criticise either Hitler or Mussolini for all their misdeeds, since they too have done some good to the mass in their own countries according to their own light.

In this connection M.N. Roy⁷ has made some timely and strong criticism of the intolerance shown by the orthodox Congressmen, who are unable to put up with even honest and justified criticism.

Congressmen, he says, are often exhorted to mind only the constructive programme, and not to bother themselves with political questions, which are no doubt the special preserve of the Congress high command.

The orthodox Congressmen are now charged by him with introducing the spirit of rigid untouchability in the Congress, though it is not a part of the constructive programme of the Congress. All the activities of the Forward Bloc are condemned as so much treason to Gandhism, as if that were the main goal before the country and not political freedom.

'Every true Congressmen must strongly disapprove of this intolerance and sectarianism', says Roy vehemently. 'Patriotism is not the monopoly of a particular breed of Congressmen who distinguish themselves by subordinating the political programme of the Congress to all sorts of dogmas and pet hobbies which one retard the development of our struggle for freedom'.

Certainly there is much room for some charity even in our stringent day-to-day political programme, and every Congressman, who does not accept Gandhism as his political dogma, ought not to be treated as an untouchable, with whom True Congressmen should have nothing whatever to do.

This kind of intolerance is doing no service either to the Congress or to the Mahatma and must be condemned severely. If this spirit had not animated the discussions in the last meeting of the AICC we should not have had some of the resolutions, which hand over absolute power to the Rightists for a year or two at least.

Mr Roy makes it plain that he has nothing in common with the Liberals or the democratic Swarajists. And yet there is room for personal friendship between them, while in the Congress that spirit and charity are lacking altogether.

That is evident from the mean and petty vendetta carried on in this very city by the Bombay Provincial Congress Committee, at the head of which stands Mr Bhulabhai Desai,⁴ a member of the Congress Working Committee and leader of the Congress party in the Central Assembly!

Is it any wonder that people who are incapable of showing a little friendly feeling for Subhas Chandra Bose or his followers, are equally incapable of bridging the gulf between the Congress and the Muslim League, however minor the difference between the two?

Orthodox Congressmen in this city made a dead-set against Bose while he was the guest of Bombay and ignored him completely, though only a few short weeks ago he was the President of Congress.

Does anybody think that such unworthy tactics and mean and spiteful treatment make for unity in the Congress, much less discipline? But evidently they are all anxious to make a success of provincial autonomy, whatever the cost, and towards that end everyone is exerting his utmost.

⁴ Benjamin Guy Horniman (1873–1948) was one of those distinguished Britishers who indemnified themselves to their countrymen. He edited the *Bombay Chronicle* from 1913 to 1933, founded the Bombay branch of the Home Rule League and launched the *Bombay Sentinel* in 1933. Horniman's close associate was Syed Abdullah Brelvi, who became editor of *Bombay Chronicle* in December 1933.

⁵ The Bombay meeting of the All India Congress Committee on 24–27 June 1939 adopted an unpopular decision forbidding Congressmen from offering any form of satyagraha without the prior sanction of the concerned Provincial Congress Committee. For details, see, pp.

⁶ Shrikrishna Sinha (1887–1961), educated in Patna College and graduated from Calcutta University; gave up his lucrative practice in Monghyr to join Gandhi's non-cooperation movement in 1921; led the salt satyagraha at Garhpura in Begusarai subdivision and earned the title of 'Bihar kesari'; elected leader of the Congress party in 1937 and, as premier, ordered the release of political prisoners; evoked strong criticism because his government imprisoned leading kusan leaders, including Swami Sahajanand; following the resignation of the Bihar ministry in September 1939, Sinha was selected by Gandhi as the first person to offer individual satyagraha. After independence, he continued as Bihar's Chief Minister until his death on 31 January 1961.

⁷ Biswanath Das (b. 1889): educated at Cuttack and Calcutta; started legal practice at Berhampur in 1920; leader of Madras Ryot Sabha; led many peasants' revolts against the Zamindars of Ganjam; elected to Madras legislative council; first chief minister of the newly created province of Orissa (1937); resigned in the same year and took part in individual satyagraha and in the 1942 Quit India Movement; imprisoned for three years and released in 1944; president of the Provincial Congress Committee; elected to Rajya Sabha in 1958; Governor of Uttar Pradesh, 1962–67.

⁸ See Rajendra Prasad to Abul Kalam Azad, 3 July 1939, to Ram Babu Saxena, 3 July 1939, and to Jawaharlal Nehru, 8 and 11 July 1939, in Valmiki Choudhary (ed.) *Dr Rajendra Prasad: Correspondence and Select Documents*, Vol. 3 (Delhi, 1984).

⁶ In the first months of Chakravarti Rajagopalachari's (1878–1972) premiership of the Madras Presidency, 38 political prisoners were discharged. He was, however, severely criticised for enforcing section 7 of the Criminal Law Amendment Act on those who protested against his decision to introduce the teaching of Hindustani in 125 schools.

⁷ Manabendra Nath Roy (1887–1954) had a keen and incisive mind with considerable organizational skills. Quite early in life he was associated with the revolutionary movement in Bengal, especially the Yugantar group, but received public notice as the founder of the Communist Party of Mexico, the first Communist Party to be founded outside the Soviet Union. He came to be known as 'the symbol of Revolution in the East' (Lenin), the 'most colourful personality of all non-Russian Communists in the era of Lenin and Stalin'. Following his break with the communist International, of which he was a full member in 1924, M.N. Roy returned to India only to be sent to jail in connection with the 'Kanpur Communist Conspiracy Case'. He was released in 1937. He joined the Congress and was member of the AICC. His activities within the party and outside are covered in detail in this volume in the section 'Organising the Left'.

⁸ Bhulabhai Desai (1887–1946) was drawn into the Congress movement in 1930. He was, along with Dr M.A. Ansari, one of the architects of the Swaraj Party and was elected to the Central Assembly in 1934. He distinguished himself as leader of the Congress party in the Legislative Assembly, as President of the Bombay Provincial Congress Committee, and in defending the INA prisoners, at the Red Fort Trial towards the end of 1945.

48. Resignation of Congress Ministry: Erskine¹ to Linlithgow, 10 July 1939

Linlithgow Collection, Acc. No. 2203, NAI

I feel that I ought to let you know at once some information concerning the Congress attitude towards a war, that I managed to extract from Rajagopalachari last Saturday in Madras at a time when he seemed to be in a more than usually communicative mood.

2. He told me that the Congress High Command with the approval of Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru had definitely made up their minds that on war being declared the Provincial Congress Ministries would vacate their offices. The Premier said that Gandhi himself was very keen on this line of action as he was quite certain that, with their policy of non-violence it would be impossible for the Congress party to give active assistance and cooperation in time of war.

3. Rajagopalachari also told me that the Congress High Command had decided that they would allow the Congress Ministries to assist in preparation for a war, such as ARP measures, & c.; so long as the Government of India paid for these preparations.

4. I put it to him that to allow the Congress Ministries to give active assistance in preparations for a war and at the same time to decide if war actually broke out to force them to resign seemed to be a most illogical attitude for the High Command to take up.

5. The Premier agreed and said that it certainly seemed to be illogical but that he could not help it; and that as a matter of fact it was mainly due to the strong line that he himself had taken that the High Command has consented to allow the Congress Ministries to participate actively in ARP preparations.

6. The Premier also told me that while the Congress Ministries would vacate office on a declaration of war his party did not intend to be in any way obstructive, nor would they resort to civil disobedience or any action of that sort.

7. I told him that while no doubt this mild course was the present intention of the High Command I did not see how they would be able to maintain it for any length of time, for the authorities would obviously have to lock up people who made seditious speeches or attempted to obstruct recruiting, & c., and many of these would be Congress extremists. Rajagopalachari replied that the course of events would probably result in the eventual hostility of Congress, but that he himself

wanted us to win any possible war against the totalitarian countries, and would personally do his best to keep any hostility within bounds...

¹ John Francis Erskine (b. 1895); educated at Eton and Oxford, appointed governor of Madras in 1934.

49. A Province on Its Own: Where Congress Fails

Leader, 11 July 1939

11 July 1939

The United Province, it has always been thought, would provide the best test of the working of the new Indian Constitution. There the Congress Party has a free hand in a region of 50,000,000 people--peasants for the most part, but including the inhabitants of some of the most important industrial centres of India. That developments there are not too promising is taken as a bad augury for the Reforms in India as a whole.

There is a growing belief in the United Provinces that authority is disintegrating; that law and order are not being maintained as they should; that there is interference with the administration of Justice; and that the Services and the police are losing confidence. Communalism would seem to be more rampant there today than at any time during the past generation. Religious intolerance is increasing, not only between, but within, communities.¹ Communism is developing and agrarian discontent is widespread; Zamindars and Taluqdars complain that they are being deprived of the ancient social and economic status they have long enjoyed.

The Congress Ministry cannot be blamed for all the difficulties. Left to himself, Pandit Govind Balabh Pant, the Premier, would no doubt prefer to see his administrative policy taking other and more rational lines. He has long been considered as belonging to the Right Wing of the Congress party, and presumably does not believe in 'wrecking the Constitution from within', which Congressmen at one time maintained was their intention in accepting office. But it is clear that Left Wing elements in his Cabinet are exerting too much influence over the administration, and the absence of an effective Opposition has given an authoritarian tinge to the policies which the Government are carrying out.

When the present Ministry assumed office it was faced with widespread peasant discontent, most of which has been created by Congressmen themselves when they roamed the political wilderness. The first step taken by the ministry was to remove the so-called 'repressive measure of the bureaucratic regime'. Free speech and the liberty of the Press were given such scope that modifications had later to be affected to restrain those who were fostering class hatred and communalism. Tenants were soon at loggerheads with their landlords; Moslems became even more disgruntled with the Hindus, particularly because of the growing influence of Congressmen with subordinate officials; and strikes were organised by agitators in important labour centers. The Services and the police loyally supported the new regime, but they were uncertain if Ministerial support would be forthcoming if they applied the law in the way in which they had been accustomed under British rule.

The social and economic doctrines which were preached for years by Congress propagandists have at last clashed with vested interests, particularly agrarian. The complexity of the economic problems not lessened by the high expectations for the redress of grievance which the politicians dangled before the illiterate and harassed peasantry. Some of the more farseeing Zamindars would naturally have forgone many of their privileges under a moderate administrative policy, and would even have collaborated in evolving it, but the Ministry was conscious of the power it had obtained

from the electorates, and proceeded to implement its election promises with scant regard for established interests.

Although the Province has more large towns than most Indian Provinces, the majority of the people live in villages. The agricultural population consists of peasants or tenants and zamindars or landlords. The number of important landlords is by no means large, although in Oudh and some parts of Agra their revenue may well be compared with that of some of the lesser Indian States. Not all of the zamindars live in their villages, and the evils of absentee landlordism are prevalent. The smaller zamindars live in the villages, but are unqualified to do much in the way of constructive work requiring capital, expert knowledge, or rationalized agricultural policy. The tenantry as a whole has been neglected and in some cases oppressed.

It is generally accepted today that the British authorities in their time did not do enough for the peasants. Under the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms some effort was made to secure them stability of tenure, but it was limited to Agra.² There was ample need for redressing agrarian grievances, and when Congress took office there was a general desire, even among zamindars, for any rational policy which would confer hereditary occupancy right upon the tenants, limit the landlords' power of ejectment, reduce exorbitant rents, and introduce legislation for the consolidation of holdings.

But the policy pursued by the Congress Government has left the impression in many quarters that the institution of zamindars itself is being abolished. The Government's first agrarian measure alienated the zamindars and to some extent demoralized the tenants, who were led to think that a policy for suspending payments of arrears of rent was in effect an invitation to pay no rent at all.³ Communists and extremists are permitted to propagate their economic gospel in the countryside, and respect for authority and order is diminishing. One taluqdar of Oudh reports that the stronger among his tenants now take the law into their own hands and tyrannise over the weaker, having in recent months set fire to their houses no fewer than 37 times. There have been spirited protests from moderate political elements, and even Congressmen themselves have urged the Government to 'govern or get out'.

The decline in the maintenance of law and order is reflected in official returns. Between 1936 and 1938 armed robberies rose from 412 to 702, burglaries from 28,316 to 34,745, murders from 862 to 1,135 and riots from 1,464 to 2,750. Under each of these heads the proportion of prosecutions launched by the police greatly declined. Petty officials of the Congress party have assumed powers they have no right to exercise. They interfere in police cases and claim the right to conduct investigations alongside those of the administrative officials. A circular issued by the Government asking district authorities to consult local Congress leaders has been responsible for much of the mischief.

Instances are by no means rare of Congress workers interfering even with the administration of justice. The High Court at Allahabad has punished several of them for contempt. The Government themselves recognise the dangers of the tendency, and have issued instruction to local Congress committees 'to refrain from interference in judicial matters.

The Hindu-Muslim tension, which has long marked the industrial areas of the Province, has lately been complicated by disaffection within the Moslem ranks between Shias and Sunnis. As many as 7,500 Shias have been arrested, and hundreds of Sunnis have courted arrest in recent weeks. It is said that the problem has been mishandled by the authorities, who have shown uncertainty and indecision in seeking a solution.

But the major communal quarrel, Hindu against Moslem, has also inevitably been intensified by the new political conditions. The slaughter of a cow, or music before a mosque, may still throw Hindus and Moslems into a ferment; but the antagonism between them has been greatly aggravated by the belief of the average Moslem that Congress Government means a Hindu raj.

In justice to the Congress party it must be said that its principal leaders are not communally minded, but the bitterness between the Congress party and the Moslem League has reached a stage which represents a grave danger to peace. The Moslem politicians contend that the two Moslems in the United Provinces Ministry¹ do not reflect true Moslem political opinion, and resent the attempt by Congress to withdraw the Moslem masses from allegiance to the Moslem League. They assert that the Government is not impartial, either in the distribution of the seats of office or in enforcing communal rights. Moslem suspicion is apt to construe even the innocent actions of the Government as directed against their community. On the other hand, the Hindus feel that the Congress Government are too indulgent to the Moslems and fail to assert their authority over them when circumstances warrant it.

Labour unrest derives more from political agitation than from genuine labour grievances. Employers live in a state of uncertainty owing to labour troubles, labour legislation, and taxation policies which are regarded as ill-considered and liable to check industrial development. Employers are beginning to consider erecting new plants in the Indian State or in the Punjab, away from perpetual political interference and communistic propaganda.

The financial policy of the Government commands little confidence. There is much opposition to the projected employment tax, which falls with special severity on the salaries of public servants. It is argued that this is in effect an income-tax, which under the Constitution is a Federal subject. Opponents of the tax maintain that the Governor should reserve this question for the pleasure of the Governor-General, in any duty of the tax in the Courts and, if need be, before the Privy Council. Among reasons given for the tax is the need to replenish the Government's prohibition policy, which has resulted in losses of revenue of more than Rs 40 lakhs (about \$ 300,000).

It was inevitable that those who for years had led subversive movements in the Province should find serious difficulties awaiting them when, they assumed responsibility. Something like a social and economic revolution is taking place in the United Province, a revolution which is only less dramatic than most revolutions of history because it is going on behind a façade of parliamentary Government.

¹ This refers to the Shia-Sunni conflicts in Lucknow

² In 1926 the Agra Tenancy Act was passed which repealed the Act of 1901 and brought about important changes in Tenancy laws. The Oudh Law was amended in 1921 and again in 1926. According to the Congress Agrarian Enquiry Committee Report of 1936, 'the Agra Tenancy Act of 1926 was a distinctly retrograde step in regard to occupancy rights', for it deprived the peasants of their prescriptive right of becoming occupancy tenants after 12 years of continuous cultivation. Instead, the zamindars were empowered to confer these rights at their own discretion.

³ On 27 July 1939, the Congress Legislature Party met to draw up the outlines of the reforms. It decided to stay immediately all suits against tenants. On 2 August, it established committees to consider agrarian legislation and proposals for relieving rural indebtedness.

⁴ Rafi Ahmad Kidwai and Hafiz Mohammad Ibrahim (1889-1968), who went over to the Congress in 1937 and was minister of Communications in the UP Ministry

50. Elections and after: A General Survey of Congress Rule

Article by Nawab Ahmad Said Khan of Chhatari, *Leader*, 12 July 1939

12 July 1939

The great struggle to achieve self-government for India and to break the fetters of foreign rule, so that she might develop in accordance with her own genius, will win the approbation of a great majority of the people of this country. The voice of self-determination raised by the Congress

reached every nook and corner of the country and won either active support or silent admiration from every section of Indian society.

People thought that if a Congress Government came into being they would be able to understand the needs of the country and of the people better than foreigners and that a new era of peace and good-will, of prosperity and happiness, would dawn. Every class defined Swaraj according to its own desire and was encouraged by the speeches of different leaders.

By such speeches contradictory expectations were created. Labourers thought that their wages would be doubled or trebled, that they would have to work less and be paid more; *ekka* and *tonga* drivers thought that they would be freed from the shackles of the municipalities and the district boards. Tenants thought that they would have to pay no rent, the zamindars felt that their possession of land would be so complete that no revenue courts would be allowed to interfere with their discretion. Even the Government servants thought that if the Congress party came into power they would be able to hold their own against the daily interference of their own superiors.

These were some of the notions entertained and the expectations formed by the people which were bound to be shattered at the rocks of disappointment, because they had no relation to the realities of life. But the thinking section of the country hoped that, under a Congress Government, communal feelings would gradually disappear, the economic condition of the people would be improved, the administration of the country would be more efficient and less costly and that there would be a reign of peace and order. We may leave aside the exaggerated notions of the illiterate masses, but let us see how far the hopes and expectations of the thinking section have been realised.

Communal tension was never greater than today. It is not confined now to the Hindus and the Mussalmans only but has spread further between the various sections of these two communities and with regret one has to admit that there is no sign of any abatement. It has destroyed the happiness of our social life in the cities, it has reacted on the peace and order of the province, it has made the condition of the members of minority communities in the villages almost intolerable on account of the constant danger of aggression by the members of the majority community and it has made life unpleasant and insecure in the cities.

I am glad to see some signs of people realizing the damage done to our daily peaceful life by this communal tension; and I hope and pray that they may fully realise the danger as soon as possible, because I see no hope unless and until people themselves find out how necessary it is to show tolerance to each other's point of view.

As I have said before, I repeat that the Congress made a great mistake in forming a party Government in this country instead of forming a National Government through coalition with other parties. We cannot, and should not, follow European countries blindly. Conditions here are so different that it is unwise to hope that future political development in this country will be strictly on the English pattern. In England they have no such marked religious difference, nor are there so many castes and creeds as are found in India. Consequently, in England they do not have communal electorates as we have in India, there are no such cultural differences as in this country and, last but not least, in England the economic problem is not so acute, nor so pressing as it is in India.

With such diverse conditions, how is it possible to expect to form a government on British lines successfully, at any rate in the very beginning? What is needed is a government in which all major classes and communities have the fullest confidence. The Congress always claimed to represent every community, class and interest in the country. It would have been more in the fitness of things if they had proved by their action at the time of the formation of the government that they were out to win the confidence of all.

Even now I see no reason why they should not reconsider the whole question and I am as sure that if they were to extend the hand of friendship the minorities would be willing to settle these difference and welcome an honourable peace as I am convinced that it is the duty of every patriot to work for communal harmony, instead of accentuating differences.

It is clear to everybody that the economic condition of the people cannot be changed by a magic wand. Economic development is bound to be a very slow process and any tangible process can be achieved in years and not in months. The Government is trying, according to their own light, to raise the economic level of the people and have introduced several measures in the legislature for this purpose. But it is doubtful whether the line that they have adopted will really improve the financial position of the province as a whole. Curiously enough our Government has made itself conspicuous by increasing the pitch of taxation in every direction and there are further measures under contemplation which will impose new taxes. This will not, and cannot, lead towards raising the financial standard of the people in the province. At best these measures may be called an effort towards the redistribution of wealth, but certainly not toward increasing the wealth of the country.

Let us see how far redistribution of wealth will solve the problem in these provinces. I shall take, for the purpose of illustration, the case of the tenantry. Suppose the share of the Zamindar in the rent is abolished altogether and all the money which is so realised by the Zamindars is divided among the tenants. What will be the economic results of it even if this extreme and impracticable step is taken? The amount of the Zamindar's share in the land is nearly nine crores in these provinces and the population, taking into consideration the rise since the last census, must be about 5 crores. Seventy five per cent of our population is agriculturist, which means that nearly $3\frac{1}{4}$ crores is divided between them, it will give about Rs 2/8 per head per annum. Will it make the financial condition of the masses any better if Rs 2/8 are added to their annual income?

Then what about 12 or 14 lakhs of Zamindars, excluding the hill area, and 22 lakhs of Zamindars, including Nainital and Garhwal also? Will they not starve? I have purposely taken an extreme case, which is really an impossible one, and even that does not solve the question. Redistribution presupposes enough wealth in the country; but the fact is that we are a poor country and it is not redistribution but increase of wealth which is needed. We can put more money in the pocket of the tenant if we can enable him to get better prices for his produce. We know that at the time of the harvest there is such a tremendous dumping that the price of agricultural produce goes down. If we could only make it possible for the tenant to sell his produce gradually, say in three months' time, instead of dumping the whole on the market at the time of harvests we shall be doing him more good than all the sections of the Tenancy Bill put together. The agency of the Zamindars itself can be utilised for the benefit of both, the tenant and the Zamindars. If political considerations could be put aside, a scheme of marketing on these lines would enrich the tenant and create friendly relations between the zamindar and the tenantry, to the mutual benefit of both.

But unfortunately this is a big if; and our Congress Government cannot forget that it was a Zamindar party that opposed them during the elections. I would appeal to them to forget this in the interests of the country and to utilize the Zamindars' agency freely in the rural areas for the betterment of the condition of the masses. Their present policy, I am sure, has not led so far, and will not lead, to prosperity. It has created class warfare and will distinctly lead to poverty and unhappiness in the rural areas.

51. Elections and After-II

Article by Nawab Ahmad Said Khan of Chhatari, *Leader*, 13 July 1939

13 July 1939

Nowhere have the Congress Government in UP failed so hopelessly as in efficiency of administration or maintenance of law and order. In reply to a question of mine, the Government gave the following figures which speak for themselves:—

(a)

Number of true Police cases

	1936	1937	1938
(i) Dacoities	412	496	702
(ii) Burglaries	28,316	29,687	34,745
(iii) Murders	862	1,013	1,135
(iv) Riots	1,464	2,053	2,750

(b)

Percentage of Prosecutions launched by the Police

	1936	1937	1938
(i) Dacoities	53	39	30
(ii) Burglaries	13	12	10
(iii) Murders	51	46	41
(iv) Riots	35	27	23

(c)

Percentage of convictions by the Courts

	1936	1937	1938
(i) Dacoities	41	29	21
(ii) Burglaries	11	10	8
(iii) Murders	30	27	22
(iv) Riots	25	19	15

The alarming increase shown by these figures in violent crimes of dacoities, murders, riots and burglaries give a very clear proof that the present policy of the Government has destroyed the efficiency of the administration and consequently has endangered peace and order throughout the province. I see no signs of improvement even now. The position is still deteriorating and it will not be without interest to seek the cause of this deterioration in the administration of law and order.

The Congress party always tried to run down Government officials in the past. They taught people to break the law and encouraged a spirit of indiscipline and lawlessness and now that they are in power the chickens have come home to roost. Besides this, irresponsible and selfish people have joined the party since the Congress has come into power, not because they believe in the Congress programme but only to serve their own purposes. It is they who still preach in the rural areas disrespect of the authorities and as they do it in the name of the Congress they have the prestige and the influence of the Government behind them. Their efforts are directed towards destroying the influence of the local officials and of all those who were and are interested in the maintenance of peaceful conditions in the localities to which they belong.

In the past, I say this without any fear of contradiction, Government officials could maintain law and order through their prestige and through the help of the peace-loving and influential people of the area, particularly the zamindars. Now, when the prestige of the local authorities and the influence of the zamindars have been completely destroyed, there is no agency left to control the activities of those who wish to take the law into their own hands. I am glad that the All India Congress Committee have prohibited local Congress Committees from interfering with the Congress Ministries in the administration of the province. They must revive the prestige of the officials and should encourage the old cooperation between the local officials and the influential people of the area again. Unless they stop the tendency to have parallel investigations with the police and of outsiders going and exciting people against the zamindars, conditions are not likely to improve.

So far I have briefly put my humble opinion of what is happening at present and what we had expected. Now I should say a few words about certain matters unconnected with the Congress or the Congress Government.

There is a feeling daily growing in the minds of the minorities that the safeguards with which the Governors were entrusted have become dead letters. This feeling is growing. Not only in the minds of the minorities but, sometimes, in the minds of the members of the services also. But on this occasion I wish to deal with the question of minorities alone. The working of the reforms during the last two years has shown that the Governors, even with the very best intentions, cannot give protection to the minorities in a tangible form. They may be using their influence by giving advice to their Ministers, but how far that advice is accepted, we do not know. To me it seems that the Governor cannot use his free will on account of the political pressure of a strong, well-organised party throughout India. Whenever there is any such occasion, he must be naturally thinking: 'It is a case where I can interfere but what will be the result of my interference? A crisis in my province which may be followed by other provinces also and may develop into a first-class all-India crisis. Is it worth while to raise such a storm for such a comparatively small matter?'

When a Governor finds himself in this mental attitude he brings to see that after all it is really a borderline case and that he had better not interfere, except, perhaps, by tendering advice to his ministers. I remember this point was raised in the Minorities Sub-Committee of the Round Table Conference and, as far as I remember, my friend, Sir C.Y. Chintamani, opposed the proposals of entrusting these powers to the Governor as a Governor is the head of the administration. Sir C.Y. Chintamani was willing to satisfy the minorities by entrusting these powers to some other statutory body but not to the Governor whom he wanted to be a purely constitutional head of the administration. I did not agree with him then, but now I see that perhaps he was right and I was wrong.

A federation of autonomous provinces and states is a logical and a natural sequence of the Government of India Scheme. It is impossible to have an autonomous province under an entirely irresponsible Centre collecting taxes from the people living in the provinces, administering central subjects without the consent of the people—and often through certification—and therefore the opposition cannot possibly be to the Federation, but to certain features of the scheme as embodied in the Government of India Act. This scheme has been criticised and opposed by the Congress, by the Muslim League and by the Princes. The opposition has been for different reasons and, some time, for reasons contradictory to each other. The Congress have opposed it because they think that it does not go far enough and they wish to have some hand in controlling defence and foreign policy also. But there is, I believe, one more very strong reason at the back of their mind for opposing the Federal scheme, i.e., that it is not likely to give them a majority in the Federal Legislature on account of separate electorates for the minorities and the power of nomination of members in the hands of princes.

These are their reasons for opposing the scheme, and if changes are made in this direction to their satisfaction they will accept it. But if the changes are not made as the Congress desire, the old formula of combating the Federation from within will be applied and the Congress will take part in the elections.

The Muslims have opposed Federation because they fear that the communal majority might eventually result in putting into power a communal oligarchy, and also in the few provinces in which they happen to be in a majority a domineering Centre might eventually superimpose on their legislative and executive authority, and the efforts of those Muslims who went to the Round Table Conference and fought hard for the creation of Muslim majority provinces will be absolutely nullified.

The princes have put forward their own proposals for amending the Federal scheme to make it acceptable to them. It is they and they alone who can stop the Federation on account of the Statutory provisions that unless a certain percentage of princes are willing, the Federal scheme will not apply. In my opinion it is very likely—and in fact it is probable—that an understanding will be arrived at between the Princes and the British Government as it is in the mutual interest of both the parties. The princes know fully well that even if they keep aloof from the Federation they cannot stop their own subjects from trying to secure for themselves a democratic constitution in their states. The British Government knows too well that the refusal of the princes can stop, at least for the present, the application of the Federal scheme, and therefore there is every chance of an understanding between them and the princes. Lest our case should go by default, I would appeal to the Muslim leaders to put forward their definite proposals of such changes as they wish to have in the Federal scheme, because as soon as the princes are ready to join in sufficient numbers the Federation will become an accomplished fact. Therefore, we should put forward our proposals as soon as possible before the country and the British Government so that they must be considered along with the objections of other parties.

52. Combating Communalism

Editorial, *Tribune*, 13 July 1939

13 July 1939

In the matter of combating and eliminating communalism the Sind government has given an excellent lead to the rest of India. At a time when two other provincial Governments with predominantly Muslim ministries are straining every nerve to extend the boundaries of communalism, his predominantly Muslim Government has definitely arrived at the bold decision to do away with communal separation, at least in the constitution of local bodies. The latest news from Karachi is that the Sind Government has extended the life of the local boards and municipalities throughout the province, postponing elections to these bodies, which were sure to take place early next year, to 31st March 1941, in order to be able to implement its decision regarding the introduction of joint electorates, the abolition of nominations and the provisions of universal adult suffrage. It is further announced that a beginning is to be made with Karachi City next year and a Bill employing the above principles, which is now ready, will be introduced during the next session. The substitution of joint for separate electorates, the complete abolition of nominations and the provision of adult suffrage are all reforms to which the Congress is deeply and irrevocably committed, but while, for good reasons or bad, most of the Congress Government have not yet been able to take any substantial practical step towards the carrying out of these reforms, this non-Congress Government, with a progressive Muslim Ministry, is forging ahead. It

is interesting to observe that in this matter of joint versus separate electorate, an agreement does not exist in most other provinces. This is shown by the fact that the predecessor of the present Premier in Sind, who, unlike him, had an anti-Congress mentality, had also declared himself unequivocally for the substitution of joint for separate electorates not merely in the case of local bodies, but also of the legislature. In point of fact he was the first Premier in any non-Congress province to make any such declaration. This is a fact of unmistakable significance, because it will make it difficult for the opposition, if and when the proposal comes up for consideration before the legislature, to oppose it with that strength and unanimity which so often impedes the progress of even the most wholesome of reforms.

Another important step towards reforming the administration of local self-governing bodies in the province, which the Sind Government has in contemplation, is the setting up of a provincial board under the chairmanship of the Minister for Local Self-Government, which will be empowered to appoint, dismiss or punish all officers of local boards and borough municipalities. The constitution of local self-Government in the province, on the lines of similar bodies in other countries, is an old demand of progressive public opinion in India. If the proposed board in Sind will fulfil its purpose., which is to prevent the officers of local boards from being influenced by party intrigues, it will undoubtedly remove what is at present one of the gravest defects and shortcomings of local bodies in India. But in order that it may serve its purpose, the board will have to be so constituted as to be itself free from communal, party or sectional bias. This is more easily said than done at a time like the present, when a deliberate attempt is being made to infect the whole atmosphere of the country with the noxious virus of communalism. But it has to be done, if India is to make any headway towards national and democratic self-government, and it is difficult to see in what other or better way a beginning in this direction can be made than by the measures contemplated by the Sind Government. These measures contrast not only agreeably but fundamentally with the proposals which are said to form the basis of our own Corporation Bill. While in Sind the idea is to do away with separate electorate altogether in the constitution of local bodies, in our own case the idea seems to be to introduce the poison of separate electorates even where it does not exist, in the matter of representation of the Scheduled Castes, for instance. And this in spite of the fact, to which reference was made by one of the speakers at a recent public meeting at Lahore, that the Premier of the Punjab has more than once publicly declared himself in favour of joint electorates. What a gulf divides, profession and practice, promise and performance in the case of some of our public men, holding highly responsible positions in the life of their province and country!

It is a happy coincidence that in the same issue of the *Tribune* in which we published this gratifying news from Karachi we also published a telegram from Lucknow embodying the substance of a circular which has been issued by the Director, Public Instruction in the United Provinces to the Principals of Colleges and Head Masters of Schools throughout the province, drawing their attention to the fact that a number of teachers have been participating in communal activities and assuring them of his whole-hearted cooperation in preventing or suppressing the evil. The circular is based on complaints received some time ago by the Education Minister himself that some teachers, including even Government servants, were not only associating themselves actively with communal organisations but working in such a way as to foment communal hatred and bitterness. The minister immediately issued strict warnings to the teachers to refrain from carrying on their undesirable activities, but the warnings have not been heeded. In the UP, as in other provinces, a number of teachers and other Government servants are undoubtedly among the agents employed by communal organisations in those days for spreading the poison of communalism but so far no practical action has been taken against them by the Government either because they are anxious not to offend the communal organisations concerned, or, as, is sometimes the case, because they

are themselves in sympathy with the activities of those organisations. This is not only an undesirable and anti-national policy, but a policy which is in the highest degree dangerous and short-sighted, because its inevitable effect is to impair the purity and undermine the efficiency of the Services that more than any other have the moulding of the future of the country in their hands and by setting different sections of the people and especially the youth of the country, by the ears, to make the administration of the province and the country immeasurably more difficult. What a pity that while trying to make a scape-goat of what is described as the communal press the Governments concerned have so far done next to nothing to put a stop to these mischievous activities. Every provincial Government that knows its business should, in its own interest, no less than in the interest of the province and the country, make it indisputably clear to every Government servant that he must on no account have anything to do with any communal or other party politics as long as he is in Government service, and that he will be summarily dismissed if he disregards this wholesome rule. Of course, every Government servant is at liberty to promote social well-being or to take part in purely religious and social activities of his community, with which the State as such has nothing to do, and which naturally involve no conflict between one community or section of a community and another. But that is the limit. No Government servant can transgress this limit without seriously impairing his own efficiency in the discharge of his public duties and thus weakening and undermining the efficiency of the administration of which he forms a part.

53. On the Bihar Ministry:

Vallabhbhai Patel to Rajendra Prasad, 17 July 1939

Rajendra Prasad Papers, F. No. 1-C, 1939, NMML

Mr dear Rajendrababu,

I have received your letter of the 14th July. I consulted Jawaharlalji about the Working Committee meeting on the day he left for Ceylon.¹ He told me that he is expecting to return back to India by the end of this month. But in the first week of August he is busy with his engagements in Lucknow and Allahabad. On the third August he has some engagement in Allahabad and his Provincial Congress Committee meeting has been fixed for three days from the fifth August.² Therefore we have provisionally fixed 10th August either at Wardha or at Bombay, whichever could be suitable to Bapu. This is, of course, subject to unforeseen developments regarding the international situation. In case there is any prospect of an immediate outbreak of war, we may cancel all other programmes and meet at Delhi immediately on his return from Ceylon and he will also try to hurry up from there.

I understand Sjt Bhulabhai Desai has suddenly cut short his programme of Europe and left this morning by the Imperial Air Service and he is expected to reach Karachi on Wednesday evening.³ This sudden departure of his raised apprehension about the foreign situation. Anyway, there are threatening clouds gathering in the horizon.

Subhas did meet Mr Jinnah when he was here.⁴ Before he went to see Jinnah he came to Bapu and asked him whether he could see Mr Jinnah and try for a settlement of the communal question so far as his own Province is concerned, leaving aside the all-India question which was not likely to be solved in the near future. Bapu, of course, told him that by all means he can do so if he thinks that it is possible and if he can solve that problem in his Province everybody would indeed be pleased. This was the private conversation that he had with Bapu and thereafter he met Mr Jinnah at his place by asking for an appointment. On his return again Subhas met Bapu and told him that he has got Jinnah's permission to settle the question locally and Mr Jinnah's attitude was, according to him, very helpful. Then he said that Mr Jinnah was complaining bitterly about the taxation

proposals⁵ of the Bombay Government regarding its prohibition scheme and he said that the tax was invidious and intended to hit the Muslim community hard. Bapu, of course, asked him not to say anything, but to consult the ministry if he has any doubts. After Bapu left for the Frontier,⁶ he came out with a long statement making a vigorous attack on the Bombay Government's prohibition policy.⁷ You must have read all that from the Press and I do not wish to repeat here anything about it. He has dug his own grave by meddling with this affair. This is all the result of his interview with Jinnah.

I am enclosing herewith a copy of a report on the working of the Bihar Ministry which I received from a source which is not hostile to the Congress and I think if the facts stated in the report are true as must take immediate steps to set matters right in Bihar before it is too late. Some day, or perhaps sooner than we can imagine, the ministry may be attacked in the independent Press through independent sources. I have been suggesting the increase in the strength of the ministry since a long time, and although you agree with me that the personnel should be strengthened, you feel that there are other difficulties which you think are insurmountable. In any case, something should be done in time to prevent the rot.

When I went to Bihar I had hoped to see a harassed Ministry with its innumerable problems, sympathized by at least a substantial sections of the population. But I was disillusioned. I heard no word of sympathy but only curses and expressions of disgust (from) officials, non-officials, Landlords, Kisans, Muslims, Hindus, and the general public, and they will say: 'The Ministers are doing a fine job of it, namely, giving jobs to their friends and relatives. As for other things, they are just sleeping and sending the Province to dogs. The best thing they can do is to resign and get out.'

The Ministry is faced not with one but innumerable problems, each acute and urgent in itself. There is the agrarian trouble, then there are strikes, there are the annual and devastating floods, there is the problem of cooperation which in Bihar is in the most parlous straits, then there is the question of education in which Bihar is most backward and so on and so forth. True, the resources at the disposal of the ministry are limited, but given efficiency and whole-hearted and public-spirited work, the ministry could have achieved a lot. But lethargic Bihar seems incapable of producing an efficient Ministry for, curiously enough, the present Ministers are perhaps the best available.

Let me take the Ministry's sins of commission and omission one by one.

Jobbery easily takes the first place in the catalogue. The way the ministry has been circumventing the authority of the Public Service Commission is most scandalous. In fact the Commission had made a representation to the Governor and also to the Ministers but the letters were removed. There are three ways by which the ministry hoodwinks and defeats the real purpose for which the Commission has been set up. First of all, appointments of their favourites are made on a temporary basis for six months and then the job is advertised, with the result that with the experience gained during six months' service the ministry's nominee easily comes out best among the candidates. Another way of doing things is to frame the advertisement in such a way that the ministry's favourite alone can answer the required qualifications. Thirdly only one candidate is sent up and the Commission asked to say whether he is fit for the job or not. Many are the jobs which have gone to the Ministers' nominee like this.

Casteism among the Ministers is rampant. It assumed the most acute proportions at the time of making appointment to the post of Manager of Bettiah Court of Wards estate. This had become a disgraceful scandal and has caused widespread discontent. When it was once decided to appoint a non-official Indian in that post, all sections, especially for Champaran in which district lies Bettiah, pleaded that Mr Bipin Bhari Verma (who was at last appointed to the post after a period of nearly one year of suspense at the instance of Gandhiji) should be made the Manager. But he is

a Kayastha and the Premier is a Bhumihar. The Premier did not like to give that position to Mr Verma. The Finance Minister threatened to resign. When Mr Verma came to know of this he decided not to go near it. But unfortunately for the Premier there was no other competent candidate among Bhumihars available. Dr Rajendra Prasad shifted this burden on Gandhiji who was asked to finally instruct Mr Verma whether to take the job or leave it. Gandhiji favoured that Mr Verma should resign his seat in the Assembly and take the appointment. And so it was that Mr Verma is now the Manager.

This is a case of casteism par excellence but other cases are not wanting. Only recently a Bhumihar with only eleven years' service in the provincial cadre has been appointed Rent Officer, a post reserved for the ICS. Within two years he will be appointed District Magistrate. The objection is not that he is from the Provincial Service but that he is so junior and that he has superseded so many others. His only qualification is that he is a Bhumihar and was for some time Private Secretary to the Premier.

A relative of one of the Ministers has recently been appointed Deputy Superintendent of the Government Printing Press. The gentleman has no knowledge of printing and he has been sent to England at Government's expense to get training.

So on and so forth, *ad nauseam*.

Unlike other ministries, the Bihar Ministry has not abolished nominations to local bodies. Even in the Municipal Amendment Bill nominations are only nominally abolished for they have been substituted by cooperation. The main object of this is to give seats in local bodies to relatives and friends.

With so much interest and time devoted to jobbery, it is no wonder that the Ministry is most inefficient. It often happens that no Minister at all is present in the Assembly and the work is left to be carried on by the Parliamentary Secretaries and most of all by the Advocate-Generals in some of the Provinces but in Bihar a visitor is struck by the presence of the Advocate-General in all the sittings of the Assembly and the Council and by his continuous spokesmanship of the Government. In fact, he can be easily mistaken for the Premier by one new to this Province, so much does he dominate the daily proceedings. And he has to do it perforce because the job is too much for the Ministers. There is no cooperation and consultation among the Ministers. Each goes his own way and each abuses the other, in private. One Minister is reported to go even to the length of saying that so long as another Minister is surrounded by Bengali officers, he will have nothing to do with the other's department.

Hardly if ever do the Ministers attend the Secretariat. They are supposed to do their work at home, and at home only durbars are held. The result is that files accumulate for months together and business is unduly delayed. Appointments are given only to be broken. Officers are called to the headquarters from their stations and sent back saying that matters would be talked over later. For hours together officers have to sit at Ministers' houses before they can get audience not for personal purposes but for official business.

After this, the tale of the manner in which the Ministry has handled its flood problem is raised in the Legislative times out of number. The Ministry's only reply is that they know the gravity of the problem, that they have ordered surveys and they are paying attention to it. Nothing, however, has been done, not even a bit. Saran is perhaps the worst-affected district. Its contiguity to United Provinces gave at first an excuse to the Ministry in that before anything can be done, consent of cooperation of the neighbouring Provinces must be secured as the problem in that district is common to both. The people, however, clamoured for some immediate relief by reconstructing the *bandhs* etc., they could not wait helplessly any more till the preliminaries were over and some measure of permanent relief was decided upon. The people promised to give free labour and even

to bear the cost later by paying taxes. The Ministry was overwhelmed; a special officer was appointed, conferences were held, schemes drawn up but nothing has been done so far. And the rains are already on. The result is immense discontent, another handle to kisan leasers who are now openly preaching lawlessness and it can be taken as a certainty that clashes and riots would soon become a daily occurrence in that district. Meanwhile the Ministers are busy attending marriage functions, visiting small villages, presiding over unimportant conferences.

It may be added here that while, under the pretext of ill-health, the Premier did not go to Bombay to attend the Premiers' Conference, he came down to Patna from Ranchi to attend the marriage of the daughter of the Police SP who is a Bhumihar.

In the very first session after assuming office, Mr K.B. Sahay, Parliamentary Secretary, declared that he was proud to announce on behalf of the Congress that the Bihar Ministry would carry out the long demanded reform of separation of judiciary from the executive. A Committee set up by the previous government has already prepared a scheme. All that they had to do was to scrutinise it and prepare a final scheme to be put into operation. A Committee was set up to do the job. It sat and submitted an interim report. The report has been shelved in the pigeonhole and nothing more is heard of it. And in all likelihood it will lie there forever.

In the latter part of 1937 the Ministry announced that they would launch a rural development scheme. About six months later, chief organizers were appointed. Six months they took to draw up a scheme, and then came the selection of village organizers. Some months passed. Then started the organisers' training which is still going on. None knows when the scheme will actually start working.

Contrast this as well as the question of separation of functions with the expeditions way in which the United Provinces Ministry put both schemes into operation.

A Retrenchment Committee was set up. It submitted an interim report nearly a year ago. No more sitting have been held. No more perhaps will be held at all. It is only necessary to add that in that Committees there is one Minister and some Parliamentary Secretaries.

It is more than a year now that the Governors⁸ gave assent to the Prohibition Act. The rules are still being prepared.

Provision was made in this year's budget for starting an intermediate college for girls. The college was to be started this year. Nothing of it has been heard yet. Other colleges have already opened.

Same with the proposed military training college. People in Bihar are now wondering whether these two institutions will at all start working.

It was over a year ago that the Assembly voted the demand for the scheme. Nothing has been done yet. Meanwhile the Special Officer, who has outlived his job, continues to draw his salary of Rs 800 per month all right.

Prohibition has been a fiasco, an utter fiasco if some reports are to be believed. It really amuses one to hear the derisive manner in which it is spoken of in Bihar. It is reported that toddy tapping and drinking goes on openly and freely, many times with the connivance of the excise officers. There are reports that preparations for drinking bouts are made with the connivance of the officers who leave the place on the day the event is to come off. People living in villages will tell you that drinking is now perhaps on a larger scale than before the Prohibition. Giving allowance for all the exaggeration it cannot be denied that Prohibition in Bihar has not been a success at all.

And for this nothing but the ineptitude of the Ministry is responsible. First of all the *Pasis* (toddy-tappers to whose community the Excise Minister belongs) are most infuriated at being deprived of their traditional profession. Not that they mind giving up their ancestral calling but they demand that efforts be made to give them alternative employment. And this the Government

has entirely failed to do. Imagine the Excise Minister saying that those among the Pasis (who are illiterate) who are qualified will be given employment in Government services. Imagine again an official note describing that they are being taught beekeeping and motor-driving. Under the circumstances it is no wonder if the Pasis snap their fingers at prohibition. In fact the Pasis were preparing for an open revolt but when they found that there was no control and no check, they thought it better to go on doing the thing covertly instead of giving it the appearance of a satyagraha and drawing unnecessary attention towards themselves.

Secondly, the Government has made no effort to provide alternative attractions to the addicts. No propaganda is made and no effort bestowed on weaning the addicts away.

Thirdly, the administration and control are left entirely to officials. No voluntary organisations have been mobilized into the cause of Prohibition. Neither has the staff been increased, with the result that they find it extremely difficult to cope with the work of prevention.

In one word it appears that the Ministry is not at all serious about making Prohibition a success; they seem to have no heart in it.

A first class scandal cropped up recently. As a measure of mitigation the Government allowed four shops for selling sweet toddy to be opened. And it is reported that licences for all the four shops went to the Minister's relatives. Other Pasis kicked up a row and there was a big agitation and the Government had ultimately to close down the shops.

The Ministry has also bungled in its own inimitable way the agrarian problem. All said and done, it now appears that the Congress-zamindar agreement was ill-augured. And the legislation based upon it has been still worse. It is said to be full of drafting mistakes; the administrative difficulties have not been taken into consideration and while doing no good to the kisans it has helped to hasten the ruin of the petty landlords. It was an initial mistake that neither the kisans nor the petty landlords were taken into confidence when the pact was made. And now, except for the bigger landlords, the Ministry has friends neither among the kisans nor among the smaller landlords.

The *bakhast* problem has assumed now the most serious proportions. But the Ministry seems to be unaffected by it. It is a problem which cries for immediate solution, but a solution at the hands of the present Ministers seems to be as far as ever. Even the ministerial organ has been clamouring for tackling the problems immediately but nothing is being done.

And it also cannot be denied that repression in all its forms has not been spared. Some of the incidents such as the lathi charges on peaceful women strikers in Patna, the handcuffing of Rahul Sankrityayan,² etc., have been scandalous, and they have harmed the reputation of the Ministry.

The services have, however, been thoroughly loyal to the Ministry but their difficulty is the vacillating and uncertain policy of the Government. I have heard of a story of a District Magistrate being rung up at night and asked what policy he was adopting regarding the agrarian situation in his district. The officer replied that he was, of course, following the Ministry's policy but added that his difficulty was that he did not know what their policy was. The Minister quietly put down the receiver. And yet attempts are being made to shelter the Ministry by holding the accusing finger at the services, especially the European element which is assumed to be the villain of the piece.

¹ Jawaharlal Nehru reached Sri Lanka on 16 July 1939 in order to help find a 'just and honourable settlement of the problems affecting Indians there'. He returned to Bombay on 27 July.

² He presided over the meeting of the executive council of the UPCC on 6-7 August held in Lucknow.

³ Bhulabhai Desai returned to India on 20 July. In an interview he observed that tempers were frayed in Europe and the prospect of war was fast approaching.

⁴ Subhas Chandra Bose was in Bombay from 10 to 15 July 1939.

⁵ To meet some of the loss in revenue from prohibition, the ministry proposed a property-tax for property holders in urban areas. The main opposition came from the Muslims, who argued that their religion did not allow them to make investments which earned an interest.

⁶ Gandhi was in the NWFP from 7 to 24 July.

⁷ On 10 July in the course of a press Conference.

⁸ Maurice Garnier Hallet (1888–1969), governor of Bihar from 1937 to 1939.

⁹ Rahul Sankrityayan (1892–1963) belonged to the Azamgarh district in UP; derived inspiration from the Arya Samajists, as indeed from the Bolshevik revolution; travelled widely and developed proficiency in several languages; actively participated in the non-cooperation movement and in the Bihar Congress Committee, secretary of the Bihar Socialist Party which was founded in 1931, and one of the founders of the Bihar Kisan Sabha and the Communist Party of Bihar, started a Kisan Satyagraha at Pama in Saharsa and at Shahbad; arrested in 1939 and was released in early 1942; left for Russia in 1944 to join the Leningrad University.

5.4. On the Congress Ministries

Medina (Urdu), 17 July 1939, Vol. 28, no. 51

17 July 1939

[Extracts]

Strictly from the point of view of the principles of democracy, it was no doubt proper for Subhas Babu to organise protesting meeting on 9 July against the two resolutions of the All India Congress Committee.¹ But the question is whether the Congress, in its present state, fulfils the conditions of democracy. If not, then we should offer a reappraisal of the present situation and developments.

Now, it is obvious that the majority of the members of the All India Congress Committee at present consists of people for whom Gandhiji's opinion is not the opinion of a man but a revelation from heaven; therefore, they consider it their religious duty to blindly follow his dictates. It has to be admitted that the Congress today is not a democratic organisation, and that the result of Gandhi-worship is that many things are happening in the Congress today which go against its principles and resolutions. The Congress had allowed the acceptance of Ministries in order that the functioning of the machinery of this Constitution should be stopped from within. But the practice today is the opposite. The same laws and rules are in force today, as they were during the bureaucratic regime before which the Congress used to characterize as the Satanic regime. Any impartial observer can not help saying that our ministers are shamelessly betraying their pledges. Some people imagined that it will be easier to build up revolutionary feelings in the country during the period of the Congress ministries. But this hope has come to an end with the adoption of the two resolutions in Bombay. If these resolutions are implemented for two to three years, the atmosphere of revolt and revolution that has developed in India would vanish in thin air. At present, the group which is called the Left-Wing of the Congress is the true standard-bearer of the ideals and strategy of the Congress....

¹ Rajendra Prasad wrote to Subhas Chandra Bose on 18 July. 'A delicate and difficult situation has been created by your action in organising protests against certain resolutions of the All India Congress Committee, passed at Bombay ... (it) will be impossible for the Congress organisation to function if subordinate committees and office-bearers of the Congress, whose duty it is to carry out and give effect to the resolutions of the AICC and the Congress, were, instead of doing that, to organise protests and demonstrations against these resolutions'.

55. The Unionist Ministry

'Repression in Punjab', *Hindustan Times*, 18 July 1939

18 July 1939

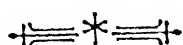
Saifuddin Kitchlew,¹ President Punjab Provincial Congress Committee, Lahore, issued the following statement:

It appears that all the resources of the Unionist Ministry are at play to crush the nationalist movement in this province. The recent promulgation of the Indian States Protection Act and the frequent use of the Criminal Law Amendment Act clearly show which way the wind is blowing. A Government which considers it necessary to ban the entry in to the province of a leader of the position and eminence of Acharya Narandra Dev² stands self-condemned in the eyes of the world. Not only that, the States Protection Act is being freely used to gag political workers, and to help the rulers of the States. Pandit Neki Ram Sharma and Lala Hardev Sahai of Hissar, two valued and brave comrades of ours, have been gauged. Why? Simply because they were advocating the cause of the oppressed people of the Bikaner State. Sir Sikander Hyat Khan has more than once declared that he represents the masses and that he will always champion their cause. May I ask him, is this the way to champion the cause of the people? Does he know what is happening today in Bikaner? Is he not aware that our brethren of Faridkot, Bhawalpur, Kalsia, Chamba and other Punjab States are today fighting for their very political existence? Will Sir Sikander let us know what he has done to help the miserable subjects of these States? By promulgating the Indian States' Protection Act he has exposed himself to severe criticism and proved once and for all that his sympathies are more with the Princes than with the people of these States.

But why worry about these states only? Our whole province is on fire, Kisan workers are being arrested all over the province. Internments and externments are still the order of the day. Personally, I welcome this repressive policy. It only shows that the Unionists have become desperate and, therefore, are adopting all possible means to consolidate their position. A regime which persecutes severity is always one that is conscious of its impending annihilation. But let our friends of the Unionist Party realise that repression has never succeeded in checking the onward march of a revolutionary movement. Popular movements always thrive on repression. That is why the Congress is so powerful today. In spite of the repression of the Government, the Congress will continue its march towards its final goal and it will not be long when the whole Punjab, with one voice and determination, will stand united under the Congress Flag.

¹ Saifuddin Kitchlew (1884-1963); educated in India, England and Germany; started legal practice at Rawalpindi in 1913; moved to Amritsar in 1915, where he took prominent part in the Rowlatt Satyagraha; sentenced to life imprisonment but was released under amnesty December 1919; took a leading part in the Khilafat movement and gave up practice in 1920; member, Non-cooperation Committee of the Central Khilafat Committee, 1920-21; interned for supporting the Karachi resolutions; conducted the *tanzim* campaign during 1924-27.

² Narendra Deva (1889-1956); educated at Allahabad and Banaras; joined Congress after the release of Tilak from prison; started a branch of the Home Rule League at Faizabad in 1916; joined Kashi Vidyapith at Banaras in 1921; member, UP Provincial Congress Committee and All India Congress Committee from 1921; Secretary, Independence of India League, 1928; led the boycott of the Simon Commission in 1929; arrested for participating in the Civil Disobedience movement; further member of the Congress Socialist Party; member, Congress Working Committee, 1936-38; elected to the UP Legislative Assembly, 1936, 1948; courted imprisonment during Individual Satyagraha in 1940; arrested during the 'Quit India' movement and released in 1945.



56. The Bihar Ministry's programme

Leader, 22 July 1939

19 July 1939

The progress of the mass literacy movement in Bihar was reviewed in a press interview here by Syed Mahmud, Minister of Education, president of the adult education committee, which concluded its work today. Dr Syed Mahmud observed that literacy was a prerequisite for political and economic progress, but the problem of the education of lakhs of illiterate people through paid agency was well-nigh impossible of solution due to lack of funds. Hence last year he appealed to the spirit of social service of the educated youths and mobilized them for this work on voluntary basis. The response so far has been very encouraging.¹

Literacy work had made also excellent progress in jails where 33,000 out of 52,000 illiterate prisoners had become literate. Dr Syed Mahmud emphasized that to make the movement successful it must be carried on as a mass movement, and the active assistance and support of all sections and public organisations was essential. He believed that with the gradual expansion of prohibition all over the country adult education would receive a great stimulus. Increase in literacy in its turn would also ensure success of prohibition.

Of the problems facing the adult education movement he said that the most important was how to make literacy permanent. The most effective method of ensuring this was the providing of a regular supply of suitable books for these new literates. In Bihar much progress had already been made in that direction by the publication of fortnightly newssheets, and village libraries were being opened in 4,000 villages which had been made literate.

Dr Syed Mahmud emphasized that the time had come when universities should allow the masses to share the benefits of university education. Further, it was necessary that social service was included among the subjects of study at the universities and all students should be given a regular course of training. For the successful promotion of adult education, the training of teachers in its technique was very necessary.

¹ Gandhi wrote to Syed Mahmud: 'I wish I could be with you to witness the enthusiastic response of the young men to your call. But that cannot be. I hope the enthusiasm will last and that soon illiteracy will be banished from Bihar'. See Gandhi to Syed Mahmud, 11 April 1938, in V.N. Datta and B.E. Cleghorn (eds.), *A Nationalist Muslim and Indian Politics*, Delhi 1974, p. 167.

57. The Congress Ministry in UP: T.B. Sapru to

Raja Maheshwar Dayal, 19 July 1939

Sapru Papers, Microfilm Roll No. 4/S-2, NMML

My dear Raja Saheb,

Many thanks for your letter of the 14th of July. I am glad you have submitted the Memorial to His Excellency the Governor requesting him to reserve the Employment Tax Bill for the consideration of the Governor General. I note that the Memorial has been signed by 1200 persons who are likely to be affected by the legislation. You may send the signatures also of others even though they may not be affected by the tax.

I noticed in the newspapers that Pandit Pant said that the Bill had the support of all the parties and interests represented in both the houses of United Provinces. That is far from being the case. I cannot imagine that with the advent of the Congress Government human nature has changed

and the public servants have become suddenly so patriotic as to willingly submit to a deduction of their salary. I doubt very much whether the European officers share that patriotic feeling with Pandit Pant.

Sir Jwala Prasad Srivastava¹ has written to me from Simla saying that the feeling in Simla is that the legality of the Bill is not free from serious doubts. No one knows what the Viceroy may do but if the Governor should reserve it for the pleasure of the Governor-General, he will make a reference to the Federal Court. My opinion all along has been that some private party should, if the Bill received the assent of the Governor-General, file a suit in an ordinary civil court challenging its calamity, then get that suit transferred to the High Court and then take the matter in appeal to the Federal Court. A law suit by a private party, if the result is against him, can be taken in appeal to the Privy Council but I doubt very much—indeed I am clear—that no appeal can lie to the Privy Council from a decision of the Federal Court upon a reference by the Governor-General. Indeed when the Governor-General makes a reference to the Federal Court the Federal Court submits a report to him and that report does not amount to a decision which is appealable to the Privy Council. I hope you will bear this in mind. I see that your Tenancy Bill² has been referred to a Select Committee.

The Shia-Sunni position in Lucknow seems to be getting more and more complicated.³

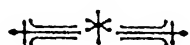
I have been steadily improving. My wound is nearly healed up but it will still require daily attention from the doctor for another week or so after which I hope to stay here up to the end of August or possibly up to the end of the first week of September.

¹ Jwala Prasad Srivastava (1889–1954); elected to the UP assembly in 1926, 1930 and 1937; knighted in 1934; held portfolios in the Viceroy's executive council; member of the Indian Constituent Assembly.

² During the discussion of the motion of Rafi Ahmad Kidwai that the Tenancy Bill be taken into consideration, leading zamindars watched the proceedings from the President's box. Rai Bahadur Mohanlal moved that the Bill be referred to a select committee to report by the end of October 1939. Next day, the 8th July, the Bill was referred to a select committee after two day's debate with instructions to report within six weeks. During the debate more than one speaker suggested that the Government should purchase zamindaris from landlords and lease them to tenants. One member declared that there would be no objection from zamindars to the procedure. Rafi Ahmed Kidwai, the Minister of Revenue, winding up the debate, said that the Bill was not intended to destroy zamindars as has been alleged, but only 'to stop the atrocities of the zamindars'. The Bill had no reference to the suggestion gaining ground in many quarters that landlords have played out their time. Members on the Congress benches spoke in favour of the Bill while those on the Opposition criticised the various provisions in the Bill emphasizing that they were against the interests of landlords. Khan Bahadur Masood-uz-Zaman characterised the Bill as a propaganda measure. In his opinion it conferred no benefit on tenants but would injure the interests of zamindars. When Rai Bahadur Mohanlal moved that the question be put to vote nobody raised a protest and the Bill was referred to a select committee consisting of eight members. The Council then adjourned, sine die.

³ The Madh-e-Sahaba-Tabarra controversy came up for discussion in the assembly on 5 July. The Government stated that 155 Sunnis had been fined in connection with the Madh-e-Sahaba-Tabarra agitation, and total fines being Rs 25,000 and odd. Shias fined in connection with the Tabarra agitation number 3,463 and the amount of fine was over Rs 59,000. It was further stated that the Government were aware of the agitation spreading in other parts of the province, although there was no danger of its affecting the neighbouring districts.

An adjournment motion in the name of Raja Akbar Ali Khan seeking to discuss the Government's action enforcing '36 hours curfew' on the Shias was dropped after discussion. Raja Akbar Ali Khan, explaining the motion, observed, that by enforcing twelve-hours' curfew on the Shias, the Government really imposed 36-hours' curfew as the curfew was already in force at night. K.N. Kaiju, explaining the Government's position, assured the House that if the Shias gave an undertaking that they would not assemble near the Inambara in the neighbourhood of which the Sunnis were celebrating "urs", the order would be withdrawn. The police authorities were convinced that there would be a breach of the peace if the Shias were allowed to gather.



58. On the use of the Press Act: Purshottam Trikamdas
to Acharya Kripalani, 20 July 1939

AICC/UPCC Papers, File No. G-32, 1939, NMML

111, Mahatma Gandhi Road
Bombay
20 July 1939

During this week we find the Bombay and the CP Governments demanding securities from various presses under the Press Act. While it is quite possible that there are good grounds for doing so in all these cases and these Governments must not have taken this step lightly, one cannot help feeling that the use of the very Act which we have consistently denounced and which we are pledged to repeal should have been avoided.

With the tendency of a certain section of the Press to inflame communal passions no one has any sympathy whatsoever. That such a tendency must be checked and severely discouraged is also beyond question. That the remedy does not lie in prosecutions under S. 124A of S. 153A is also very plain. Prosecution of this nature only result in giving a false prestige and martyrdom to persons who deserve nothing but severe condemnation from all decent people. I am not one of those who in the name of the liberty of the Press condemn any action apart from a prosecution. There are various occasions when prevention is better than punishment. That such preventive action might lie in the demand of security is quite conceivable. The question however is whether the demand for such security must rest at the entire discretion of the executive. Can we not find any means whereby such security can be made to rest on judicial decision?

My suggestion is that the Provincial Legislatures should be asked to amend the Press Act in the following manner: As S.3 stands at present, the demand for a security cannot be resisted. This Section should be so amended whereby the security proceedings may be instituted by an application by the Government to the High Court whereby the keeper of the press may be called upon to show cause why he should not furnish the security. It must also be made clear on what grounds such security may be demanded. These grounds should be restricted to those set out in S.4(1)(a)(b)(e) and (h). If the High Court is satisfied that any of these grounds exist, it will make the required order. This procedure while giving the Government preventive powers will remove the stigma attached to a mere executive order.

It should also be provided that if within six months of the order of the deposit of such security, no cause has arisen to demand forfeiture of such security the same should be automatically returned.

The procedure for forfeiture of the security must also be the same as suggested for the demand of security. If the procedure suggested above is followed the Provincial Governments will be freed from the possible allegation of trying to suppress only a particular section of the Press.

59. Bihar Congress Ministry's Work

By an Observer, *Leader*, 28 July 1939

28 July 1939

The Congress ministry in Bihar have been in office now for full two years (the second year was completed on July 20 last) and it is possible to draw certain broad conclusions as regards their work and achievements during this period. I am aware that two years is in some respects too short a period properly to appraise a Government's work, specially that of a Government which succeeded to regime wholly different in complexion from their own. They had in fact to outlive an inconvenient

legacy and start all over in certain respects. But during these two years they had adequate opportunities of laying the foundations of their policy and to evolve some measure to implement it. The full effects of these measures cannot indeed be appreciated at the moment. But the fruits of those measures which are just making their appearance can serve as an advance index of what the future has in store. It is from this standpoint that I intend to evaluate the Bihar Congress ministry's work and draw some conclusions from it.

There is little doubt about it that the Congress ministry assumed office amidst the applause of the general public and amidst good wishes from various sides. Everyone, in fact, welcomed the Congress ministers, not only because they are Congressmen but also because they are the first responsive and popular ministry to take office under the new constitution and because they assumed their position by virtue of the fact that they were returned in an overwhelming majority in the elections. It may be recalled here that when the Congress high command was engaged in negotiations with the Governor-General to secure an assurance about the non-use of their extraordinary powers by the Governors, there was support from many quarters to the Congress viewpoint, because it was felt that the decision of the Congress party to accept responsibility of office after ploughing the sands of negation for well-nigh two decades should not be vitiated by the overhanging shadow of frequent conflicts with Governors, which the use of reserve powers by them might have involved. This observation I make just to illustrate the extent of the popular interest in the Congress Party's decision to accept office.

The first measure of importance that the Congress Government proposed was the amendment of the tenancy legislation.¹ A drastic bill to amend the Bihar Tenancy Act was formulated, which aimed at reducing the prevailing rates of rents, at taking away the landlords' rights to recover arrears of 'rents from the Tenants, at giving occupancy and other rights to the tenants which they had not got before, and so on. Some of these changes in the land tenure of the province were absolutely necessary since they were intended to remove some long-standing anomalies in the tenancy legislation and to afford the tenants security of tenure. But some others were too drastic and were calculated positively to cut at the capacity of the landlords to realize rents. I do not like to enter into a detailed examination here of the various measures of tenancy legislation and their provisions. Suffice it to say that there was intensive agitation by the zamindars against the draft tenancy amendment bill, in consequence of which the Congress Government agreed to enter into negotiations with the zamindars on the question. A Congress-zamindar agreement was evolved as a result thereof, and formed the basis of the various tenancy measures (they are altogether four of them) subsequently adopted by the Bihar legislature.

The Congress-zamindar compromise, however, was not the end of the trouble. In the course of the administration of the tenancy laws, especially the Reduction of Arrears of Rent Act and the Bakasht Land Restoration Act, the scales are being weighed very much against the zamindars. The latter are being harassed and put to difficulties in a variety of ways by the vagaries of the Government rent reduction officers. The consequence is that so far as the zamindars are concerned, or rather so far as the general agrarian problem is concerned, the Bihar Congress Government's legislative activity had not produced that satisfaction or contentment which it was expected to do. There is now greater discontent, greater unrest, greater trouble in the villages and greater friction between the landlords and the tenants than even before. The zamindars have either been ruined or are on the way to ruin; that that will be the consequence of the tenancy measures even the ministers themselves admit. All the same the tenants have not been benefited or satisfied to any extent. What is worse, law and order are at a great discount in Bihar today and further deterioration in that regard is not only a possibility but also a probability.

The Congress ministry's regime was expected to result in the contentment and satisfaction of the minority communities. But actually the advent of the Congress regime was signalized by—in fact synchronized with—a wave of dissatisfaction among the Muslim community. I do not lay the blame for this development entirely on the shoulders of the Congress ministry. They have been the victims of a mendacious propaganda carried on by certain sections of Muslims, specially those belonging to the Muslim League party. The grounds for Muslim discontent are not properly verifiable; but there is no doubt about it that their feelings have been worked up by vague charges persistently made of Congress disregard of Muslim interests. The result is that during the last two years Hindu-Muslim riots have broken out at more than one place in the province, notably at Gaya and Bhagalpore, and many innocent lives were lost. Muslim feelings of dissatisfaction against the Congress Government of Bihar could possibly have been assuaged by an earnest attempt to settle the points of difference, whatever they are, by the representatives of the Congress and the National discussing them across the table. But so far the initial move in this direction had not been made by either party. Muslims, therefore, continue to nurse their unexpressed grievances; the communal tension remains at a high pitch; and the danger of outbreaks of communal rioting at some place or other in the province at some time or other continues as an imminent possibility.

The Congress ministry's advent to power has led to the emergence of another movement of protest which threatens to disrupt the territorial integrity of the Bihar province. I refer to the movement for the separation of the Chota Nagpur division from Bihar proper. This movement is an indirect offshoot of the Bengali-Bihari problem, which assumed such big dimensions recently that the Congress Working Committee had to take cognizance of it and appointed Dr Rajendra Prasad to enquire and make a report on it. His report has since been made to the Working Committee, but so far no action has been taken to give effect to its recommendations by the Congress ministry. While that matter has been hanging fire, Bengali discontent found a method of ventilating itself by the encouragement it provided to the movement in Chota Nagpur, in certain parts of which Bengali influence predominates, for the constitution of that division into a separate province on the ground that the interests of the inhabitants of that area (the Adibasis) are not being adequately safeguarded and protected by the Congress ministry: This movement has been growing in size and proportion recently. It cannot indeed be asserted that the separation move has any strong legs to stand upon. It is merely an engineered move by a few disgruntled Adibasis backed, as I have said, by certain disgruntled sections of Bengalis of Chota Nagpur and to a certain extent by the Christian Missionary elements, whose activities have wide ramifications in that area. The Bihar ministry has openly set themselves against the move for separation, while maintaining that they are prepared to do everything for the amelioration of the condition of the Adibasis. But once started such movements tend to persist and the leaders endeavour to feed it and keep it alive by propagating the convenient cry that the Bihar ministry are sacrificing Adibasi interests and denying them their due share in the administration of the province and in the public services.

I have so far shown how during their two years' tenure of office the Congress Government in Bihar have stimulated forces of discontent and opposition on more than one front. The full impact of these oppositionist factors is beginning to be felt just now; but there is every possibility of their gathering momentum in the years to come. For instance, the agrarian discontent shows definite signs of aggravation and the relations between landlords and tenants will in that case get more and more strained. This will have an essentially adverse effect on the position of law and order in the province. Similarly whatever solution the Congress Government may evolve for the communal trouble, the mischief-mongers will continue to foment discontent among the Muslim masses, so that Hindus and Muslims instead of coming together will drift further and further apart. The Adibasi agitation is at present only a ripple on the surface of Chota Nagpur; but unless there is a

strong counter-movement to minimize the mischief of the separationist agitators, these latter will continue to remain thorns in the side of the ministry and will give them no peace.

Having said all that I have said above, I will be unfair to the ministry if I allow the impression to be left on the minds of the readers that they have only stimulated forces of opposition and discontent and have not done anything good and advantageous for the people. I will refer, therefore, to two or three measures undertaken by them which, if they are successfully implemented and the rate of progress in them is maintained, are calculated to ameliorate the condition of the masses of the people. When I mention two or three items of the Congress activity, I have in mind the mass literacy movement organised by the hon. Dr Mahmud, which in the course of one year has made considerable progress and resulted in about 6 lakhs of hitherto illiterate adults becoming literate, and the electrification project, which is still in an embryonic stage but to which the Congress Government stand definitely committed. The latter scheme is expected to cost about Rs 2½ to Rs 3 crores and when completed will not only make cheap power available for the working of a number of small as well as big industries in the province but will also remove the immense difficulties now experienced by the agriculturists in respect of water supply for irrigational purposes. The mass literacy movement and the electrification project between them inhere vast potentialities for the improvement of the moral and material welfare of the people of Bihar and it is hoped that the Congress Government will spare no pains to make them a success.

In addition to these measures the Congress Government in Bihar, in company with other Congress Governments, introduced complete prohibition in Saran district and intend gradually to extend its scope to other districts in the province. This has inevitably resulted in considerable loss of revenue, which is proposed to be made good by resort to fresh taxation. In any case the moral basis on which the prohibition experiment is founded cannot be disputed and if only the Congress Government do not proceed at break-neck speed in introducing prohibition, things will adjust themselves in a few years.

Two other important legislative measures for which the Congress Governments have made themselves responsible are the Money Lenders' Act² and the Sugar Factories Control Act.¹ The Bihar Money Lenders' Act, like the prohibition experiment, is not an unmixed evil; it has been productive of some good to the debtors but perhaps more good has been done by it to the dishonest ones of this class, while it has hit some of the creditors rather hard. Its full effects are not yet visible but reports are trickling through that credit is becoming gradually restricted in the countryside and that when coupled with the very sad condition of the cooperative movement in Bihar, it is likely to prove a source of great hardship to the agriculturists in the long run if some suitable alternative sources of credit are not made available to them. The ministry contemplate legislation for debt conciliation and rehabilitation of the cooperative movement which if passed, might serve to retrieve the position to a certain extent.

The sugar control legislation too is unfortunately proving a one-sided affair in practice. It was intended to improve the position of the cane growers as well as of factory owners, but in its actual working it is turning out to be a source of disadvantage to the factory owners while the sugarcane grower is being hampered by the fixation of high minimum prices for cane.

Besides these the ministry have appointed a Retrenchment Committee, an Educational Reorganisation Committee, a Labour Committee and a Corruption Enquiry Committee, some of which have made their reports and others, notably the Educational Reorganisation Committee and the Labour Committee, have still to do so. It is quite possible that the recommendations of the last two bodies will enable the Government to evolve sound policies in regard to the educational system and labour welfare.

The main features of the work of the Bihar Congress ministry briefly reviewed above tell their own tale. It is not my intention to judge the ministry harshly; but it is a confession that I cannot help making that two years after their assumption of office, there is more discontent and unrest in the province than previously. I gave the Congress Government credit for good intentions and for some good acts too. But they have got to satisfy so many interests within and without the party to which they belong that their good intentions are not always capable of being translated into fruitful actions. Even now there is a greater danger of the ministry being brought into disrepute and their work proving a failure on account of the internal dissensions within the Congress party than by the attacks of any external agency. If at least in the future, the ministry can take a strong attitude and keep the forces of this disruption and disorder under check, they can retrieve to a great extent the position they have lost so far. There are occasional complaints that the European element in the services has not yet completely reconciled itself to the new order and is inclined to interpose spokes in the ministry's wheels. But it is not possible to verify them. While every one will be glad if the first popular Government of the province are able to show a good and satisfactory record of useful public activity at the end of their present term of office, many will be sorry if through some reason or other they prove a failure. The greater will be the regret of these latter sections of public opinion if the work of the ministry is suddenly terminated at the call of the high command for some extraneous reasons unconnected with the province. This kind of danger, as everyone knows, is not altogether remote.¹

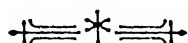
¹ In 1929 many *rayats* were unable to pay the rents of their holdings due to economic depression resulting in the selling of their land holdings in execution of decrees for arrears of rent. In most cases the land was purchased by the landlords. For the relief of such tenants, the Congress ministry passed the Bihar Restoration of Bakasht lands and Reduction of Arrears of Rent Act 1938. Lands which had been sold in execution of decrees for the payment of arrears between 1929 and 1937 were to be restored to its previous tenants if they paid half the amount for which the land had been put up for sale.

² According to the Moneylenders Act, 'All kinds of loans on which interest is charged in any form or shape except those advanced by institutions such as government cooperative societies, land mortgage banks, should be subject to regulation and control'

³ The Sugar Factory Control Act was intended to improve and secure the position of sugar cane growers as well as the factory workers vis-à-vis factory owners.

⁴ The winter session of the Bihar legislative council commenced at Patna on 24 January 1939. Two non-official bills, the Bihar Tenancy Second Amendment Bill and the Bihar Land Revenue Sales Amendment Bill, were disposed of. The first Bill, which sought to widen the scope of the grounds on which an application would be made to a District Judge for the appointment of a common manager for the administration of joint estates, was referred to a Select Committee. The second Bill providing for information of the sale of an estate in default of land revenue being communicated directly to the proprietor concerned evoked much discussion, after which the House agreed to circulate the Bill for eliciting public opinion.

The Council also granted permission for the introduction of 8 non-official Bills. Such Bills introduced were the Bihar Prevention of Hindu Bigamous Marriage Bill, Bihar Legislative Members' Privileges and Powers Bill, Bihar Tenancy Second Amendment Bill, Bihar Land Revenue Sales Amendment Bill, Bihar Prevention of Unequal Marriage Bill and Bihar Public Demands Recovery Amendment Bill.



60. Quarterly Review of the Political and Constitutional Position,
May–31 July 1939

Linlithgow Papers, Nos 8–14, Acc. No. 2324, NAI

[Extracts]

Introduction

1. It may well be that the historian of the future will assign particular importance to the first quarter of the third year of Provincial autonomy as the moment when the theory that Congress Ministries were in office not to govern the country but to wreck the Constitution from inside, was given an unostentatious burial. This is not to say that Congress policy has been officially changed; the conductor and the orchestra are the same and the piece is still Op. 1937, but it is now being played as a march instead of as a “break-down”. In support of his view the historian could point to two published resolutions of the All India Congress Committee, the first that a Provincial Congress Committee should not interfere in the day to administration of the Province by the Ministry and the second that Congressmen should not offer satyagraha against the actions of a ministry without proper authority. He would also note that certainly one Ministry, and presumably others as well, had been instructed by the High Command to refrain from raising constitutional issues with the Governor. He would reasonably deduce from the general attitude of Congress ministries that it would in future take more than some dispute about the working of the Constitution to induce a Ministry to resign. Apart from these significant happenings, there have been other things which show that some at least of the Congress Ministries are firmer in the saddle and that they have realised that they are where they are in order they may govern. Both the UP and CP Governments have during the quarter issued instruction on the subject of dealing with speeches, writings and demonstrations likely to increase communal tension which, had they issued in the days of bureaucratic governments, would in Congress eyes have brought deep discredit on their authors. In addition, the non-Congress Government in Bengal has been seen appealing for, and getting from the legislature, support for a policy, in face of a combined hungerstrike of all ‘political’ prisoners in the Province, as strong as anything which its predecessors would have contemplated, while, the Punjab Government has extended over the whole of the province the Provisions of an Act—the Indian States (Protection) Act—which advanced political opinion has for years denounced as ‘lawless’.

These developments have passed almost unnoticed by Indian political opinion, which has been absorbed in the struggle between the right and left wings of the Indian National Congress. What the outcome of this will be no one can yet say, but the possible developments arising out of this dispute are by no means only domestic in their importance. Whatever the result, Indian politics are unlikely ever to be the same as they have been during recent years and the changes may be fundamental...

II Congress Provinces

2. Assam—The Coalition Ministry’s position is not strong; its dominance by left-wing Congressmen may have the effect of detaching some of its supporters when the Legislature meets in joint session early in August to discuss the Agricultural Income-tax Bill. The Ministry’s majority in a joint session is very small, and a determined attack upon it is expected both over the bill and over the Government’s labour policy.

3. Bihar—There is nothing fresh to be said about the Ministry which maintains a low level of competence. The labour situation has been quiet: agrarian unrest has increased and communal

tension continues. The Adibasi movement for the separation of Chota Nagpur is being firmly discouraged by the Premier.

4. Bombay—In matters affecting law and order the ministry continues to pursue a firm policy. Opposition to and criticism of the “prohibition” scheme will not prevent its being put into force from the beginning of August, although a short postponement would have enabled better preparations to be made. The financial position of the Province is far from happy and it remains to be seen whether the ministry will be able to make a success of the “prohibition” scheme and keep provincial finance on an even keel, or whether it will have to seek some way out of its self-imposed difficulties. Dr Gilder, Parsi Minister in charge of “prohibition”, has recently been socially boycotted by the Parsi community; his reactions are as yet unknown.

5. Central Provinces—The Ministry has at least decided on a firmer policy towards communal troubles: tension increased by anti-Hyderabad State agitation, has been widespread. Its intentions, as proclaimed, are excellent, but it is doubtful whether anything effective will be done.

6. Madras—The anti-Hindi agitation continues. The All India Congress Committee passed a resolution in June supporting the demand for a separate Andhra Province.

7. NWFP—There is nothing fresh to be said about the Ministry, whose attitude to law and order is satisfactory. The communal situation has improved.

8. Orissa—Friction between the Ministry and the Provincial Congress Committee has, if anything, increased. There have been signs that the ministry is seeking support from the left wing as a make-weight against orthodox opposition. There are some indications of approaching trouble over the Orissa States.

9. United Provinces—Communal unrest is still the chief thorn in the Ministry’s flesh: there has been Hindu-Muslim tension and more serious rioting, and the Madhe-Sahaba dispute continues. Labour has again been restive. In both these spheres the Ministry has shown signs of increasing firmness, but only under pressure. The agrarian situation is unchanged: the Tenancy Bill has not yet become law though the final stage is about to be reached.

(a) Legislatures: events of the sessions

10. Assam—The outstanding event of the session of the Council which concluded in the middle of May was the rejection, by 11 voted to 9, of the Agricultural-Income-tax Bill. The Ministry is likely to desire a joint session of both Houses, although it is not very sure of a majority, if the Bill does not go through there will be difficulty in balancing the budget. The Council passed the Bill reducing Ministers’ salaries to a figure similar to that prevailing in other Congress Provinces.

11. Madras—Before the Assembly adjourned in the middle of May it passed the General Sales Tax Bill. Many amendments seeking to lower the rate of the tax were rejected and on the last day of the debate the opposition except for the European group, walked out in protest against the Government’s uncompromising attitude. The Bill was subsequently passed by the Council, which also passed the Entertainment Tax Bill and the Tobacco Bill.

12. United Provinces—The Assembly session ended in the middle of May. On 17th May the second joint session of the Legislature met to consider the Sales of Motor Spirit Taxation Bill (see para 25 of Survey No. 7). By 140 votes to 59 the Bill was passed in its original form. The Council passed the Employments Tax Bill (para. 17 of Survey No. 7) on 22nd May with minor amendments. The Council deleted a clause giving retrospective affect to a small Bill amending the tenancy laws and Government thereupon abandoned the third reading: this is quoted only as a further example of the Upper House’s much repeated independence. The progress of the Tenancy Bill is described in paragraph 49. The Council adjourned on 8th July.

The Assembly held another brief session beginning on July 12th, during which it accepted the amendments made by the Council to the Employments Tax Bill, and passed some agrarian legislation.

Both Houses have passed a Bill intended to provide for the better administration of the Badrinath temple in the Garhwal district; but the Maharaja of Tehri-Garhwal has objected that the Bill infringes his traditional rights with respect to this temple. In spite of a strong desire to see the Bill become law as soon as possible the Ministry has proved reasonable and anxious to avoid any unpleasantness with the Darbar: a conference was held at the end of July to discuss the objections raised and to try to find a compromise. It is believed that an understanding has been reached.

(b) Relations of Ministries with the Central Congress Command

13. There is little to be said on this subject: the Working Committee has had its hands full with the left-wing revolt and the interference of the Congress President in Provincial affairs which has come to notice, and this was largely ineffective. On the other hand the Congress Ministries succeeded in compelling the Central Command to move the satyagraha resolution, at the All India Congress Committee session at Bombay.

Mention may be made here of the resolution also passed at Bombay regarding the relation between Congress Ministries and Provincial Congress Committees. It stressed the desirability of cooperation between Ministries and Committee; laid down that in administrative matters, the Committee should not interfere with the Ministry's discretion, though it could draw Government's attention privately to specific difficulties; and declared that in the case of differences of opinion reference should be made to the Parliamentary Sub-Committee and public discussion should be avoided. This, and the resolution forbidding unauthorized provinces.

(c) Relations of Ministers with their Secretaries: methods of business

15. The instructions received by the Premier of Orissa from Vallabhbhai Patel as to the attitude which Ministers were to adopt towards social contexts with the country during his tour to Orissa at the end of July were that they would be permitted to take part in official functions but must limit their cooperation to a minimum. private functions they must boycott though they might accompany the Viceroy on sight-seeing expeditions. Later on when the Governor of Orissa asked the Premier whether he and his colleagues would be on the railway station to greet the Viceroy the Premier's reply was to the effect that until affairs in connection with the Talcher State (see para. 70) were satisfactorily settled he was afraid he could not show His Excellency the courtesy which he would have liked to show him.

16. Special responsibilities—The relations of the Governor of the Central Provinces with his Ministers have not been so happy recently. He had to inform them that unless they reconsidered their advice about the temporary abilities of some of the Commissionships (paragraph 50 of Survey No. 7) he would have to exercise his individual judgment. The Ministry gave way and the Governor got the impression that where a dispute is not of such a nature as would prefer always to give way rather than allow the Government to pass an order in his individual partly in order to avoid publicity. Later on the Ministry became distinctly aggressive over the matter of issuing instructions to local officers regarding communal trouble (see para. 63). It seems that Ministers have been talking to their followers that the Governor has began to assert himself unduly and that they will soon have to pull him up. They are likely to take a more intransigent line in difficult cases in future.

The Bihar Ministry protested strongly against the Governor's appointment of a man from the Central Provinces to the Joint Public Service Commission for the CP, Bihar, and Orissa, and an appointment which was made in the Governors. The Premier complained that he never expected

the exercise of a Governor's discretion to mean the complete exclusion of the Ministers from a case, and said that they expected to be consulted in discrete matters, and that it was this expectation which had encouraged them to remain in office.

In November 1938 the Madras Ministry submitted a memorandum for the consideration of the Secretary of State maintaining that the existing procedure in the matter of appointments of Judges was not consistent with the principles of the constitution because it excluded Ministers from consultation in regard to these appointments. They contended that the selection and appointment of suitable Judges should not be regarded as falling within the special responsibility of the Governor or the Governor-General and while recognizing the importance of maintaining the independence of the judiciary they wanted the High Court to be converted into what they described as 'an uncorrelated wheel in the machinery of Government with a tendency to consider itself as a distinct entity from the Government of the provinces'. They also claimed that in view of entries 1 and 2 of List II of the Seventh Schedule to the Government of India Act they were entitled to demand that the Governor's functions should be exercised on the advice of his Ministers. They further argued that in the United Kingdom the King appoints the Judges of the Court of Appeal on the advice of the Prime Minister and the Lord Chancellor. They requested that the existing procedure should be revised and that the appointment of a Judge of a High Court should be made in consultation with the Ministers.

In April 1939 the Bombay Ministry reopened the question of consultation with them over the appointment of High Court Judges. They were aware of the Madras Ministry's memorandum and were awaiting the decision of the Secretary of State but in the meantime they suggested that while they should not be given any initiative in making recommendations, the Governor should inform them of the names which he proposed to recommend and give them an opportunity of expressing their views. In the meantime the Secretary of State's opinion on the Madras memorandum was received. He was unable to accept the Ministers' view of the position and stated that the selection of persons to be appointed to the Bench of the High Courts is to be regarded as standing entirely outside the field in which Ministers may claim to tender advice and as a matter quite distinct from the constitution and organisation of the High Courts, which is an item in the Provincial Legislative List. While rejecting the Madras Ministers' request he recognised that there may conceivably be circumstances in which a Governor may think it useful to ascertain the views of one or more of his Ministers before submitting suggestions, but he emphasized that this does not affect the fundamental principle governing appointments. When the Home Minister of Bombay was shown this decision he took an entirely different line and professed himself to be in entire agreement with the necessity for preserving the independence of the judiciary and thought that it would be most undesirable to do anything to cast any doubt on its independence. The subject will probably be dropped.

The Premier of the UP professed to be much distressed by the award of a Knighthood to the chief editor of a provincial newspaper, who is also a staunch Liberal, whom he regards only in the light of a political opponent and as a man who has done the Government much harm by his criticisms. He declared that the honour greatly weakened the position of Government and that it might be felt that were available (or any body who opposed Government). He repeated that in his opinion it was essential that the Governor and the Ministers should in public at any rate, always appear to be acting in harmony. In this Province the Governor's experience confirms that the more remote the issue may be from one directly between himself and his Ministers the more unlikely it is that any question of repagination will arise. In this connection it is of interest to note that the chief labour Leader in Assam complained that during the discussions over the Digboi strike situation (see para 51) the Congress President showed complete lack of sympathy with

labour and adduced this as proof of the fact that Congress under the guidance of the Gandhi group did not want to disturb the status quo in Congress Provinces or to precipitate a constitutional crisis. The Governor of Bombay has also gained the impression that the Ministry have decided definitely that provincial autonomy is worth keeping. The Premier of Bombay told the Chief Secretary that the Ministry had been instructed by the Congress High Command not to create constitutional difficulties with the Governor. It seems likely that these instructions are one of the results of the High Command's differences with the left wing.

17. The Governor of the United Provinces raised with his Ministry the questions of the harm done by transfers of officers based on complaints or suggestions from members of the Legislative or Congressmen. Such transfers were giving rise to uneasiness in the Services and tended to undermine the independence of Officers. He reminded the ministers of a resolution passed by the Provincial Congress Committee in April which pointed out that it was not the business of Congressmen to interfere in the administration, more especially in things like appointments and transfers. Rather surprisingly the Ministers fully accepted the Governor's arguments.

III Non-Congress Provinces

(a) Ministers: Stability and reputation

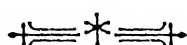
18. Bengal—The general position of the Ministry is strong after the prolonged session of the Legislature, and the Ministers themselves are confident. The Premier however does not command the full confidence of his colleagues who regard him as weak and not fully reliable; at the same time everyone knows that no Muslim party in Bengal could hold together without him. Communal, labour and agrarian conditions have been comparatively quiet. The Ministry has again stood firm in face of the terrorists' hunger strike, which at the end of July was threatening to become a dangerous issue.

19. Punjab—There have been a few defections among the Ministerial supporters, but nothing serious enough to threaten the Ministry's stability. The Premier, Sir Sikander Hyat, has been playing a more prominent part in the affairs of the Muslim League and his personality continues to dominate Provincial affairs. The Ministry has dealt firmly with labour, agrarian, and communal troubles, and with the agitations against Indian States.

61. By the Way: Central Provinces

Amrita Bazar Patrika, 31 July 1939

The Government of the Central Provinces deserve to be congratulated on the steps they are taking for liberalizing the administration of the Arms Act in the case of agriculturists who are in need of arms for the protection of their crops. They have decided that in areas in which crops are liable to be damaged by wild animals an adult male holder of 20 acres of land shall be entitled to possess fire-arms in order to protect his crops. An application for arms by such a person will not be refused except where the applicant is convicted of an offence involving moral turpitude. With the object of ensuring protection of crops from wild animals Government have also decided to exempt certain areas from the operation of the CP Games Act. These are certainly moves in the right direction. Nothing has emasculated our people so much as the Arms and Cognate Acts. It is time there were a reversal of the policy in respect of these matters.



62. The Assam Agricultural Income Tax Bill

Amrita Bazar Patrika, 2 August 1939

2 August 1939

It is time to utter a word of warning to those members of the Congress Coalition Group in the Assam Assembly belonging to Labour, Scheduled Caste and Tribal constituencies who may be thinking of transferring their allegiance. The Saadulla Group is known to be assiduously spreading the canard that the Assam Cabinet will resign if the Agricultural Income-tax Bill¹ is lost—and counting on this certain unthinking members of the Coalition Group are said to be harbouring the hope that if they oppose the Bill now they will find it easy to join the new party that may come into power. But these hopeful gentlemen are taking too much for granted; even in the event of the Bill being lost, the Cabinet, instead of resigning, may very well advise His Excellency the Governor of Assam to dissolve the Assembly on this issue. And it is a certain fact that the majority of this vacillating band will fail to be returned if a general election is held again. Do not count your chickens before they are hatched—is our advice to those members of the Coalition Group who may be so unwise as to be thinking of voting against the Bill.

¹ The Assam Agricultural Income Tax Bill was introduced by the Finance Minister, Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed, on 10 March. The Bill, which was adopted on 6 April in the legislative assembly, levied a tax agricultural income.

63. Calcutta Municipal Act

Editorial, *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 5 August 1939

His Excellency the Governor has disregarded the appeal of the Hindu Community and signified his assent to the Calcutta Municipal (Amendment) Bill. The reactionary piece of legislation has thus been placed in the Statute Book with the full knowledge of the constitutional head of the province who has been deliberately armed by the British Parliament with certain specific powers for the protection of the minority interests that it is considered by the Hindus as a most unjust and unjustifiable attack upon the Hindu rate-payers. We have not been surprised at this turn of events. It was never believed by us that the move adopted by prominent citizens to secure justice for the community by presenting a memorandum to the Governor would become successful. The issue was, however, so important that we considered it our duty to support any attempt made from any quarter to get a favourable result.

The contemptuous rejection of the memorandum signed by more than fifty thousand rate-payers including the most influential Hindu leaders of the province has been quite of a piece with other actions of the British Imperialists and their agents with which we are familiar. The principle behind all these actions can be summarized in one brief sentence: Cripple the Hindus who are a thorn in the path of British Imperialism. All other communities had more or less acquiesced to the British supremacy in India; only the Hindus and particularly the Bengal Hindus had shrunk from no sacrifice in popularizing and attempting to make effective the demand for the end of British domination. The fiat, therefore, did go forth from those who controlled the British policy that no quarter should be given to the Hindus of this province. This is the genesis of the Communal Award which has been designed to deal a severe blow first at the growth of a composite nationality in India for which the Hindus have been steadily working for more than half a century and secondly at the influence of the most detestable section of them, the Hindus of Bengal. And since the present Ministry was installed in office, this has also been the main-spring of the activities of

the enemies of India. No wonder then that the Governor, even if he had the personal inclination to do justice to the Hindus, has proved a helpless tool in their hands.

And yet only a glance at the provisions of the new Act would be sufficient to show that a great justification there was for the Governor to intervene in the matter of this Corporation legislation in justice to the Hindu community. The Hindus constitute more than 75 per cent of the population of the city. Their share of the rates and taxes which are the principal sources of the income of the Corporation stands even at a higher figure. They have also more than anybody else made the city what it is today. But the Ministry of Bengal has cleverly arranged the composition of a minority against all canons of fairness and justice and the acknowledged principles of democracy all over the world. And be it remembered this has been done not on the basis of a joint but a communal electorate under which system the Hindu majority will be precluded from all opportunity of converting their minority into actual majority representation. If this has not been deemed a sufficient cause for the Governor to exercise his 'special responsibility' for 'the safeguarding of the legitimate interests of the minorities', the Hindus should once and for all clearly understand that they cannot expect any relief whatsoever at the hands of the ruling authorities.

The supporters of the measures are trying to mislead public opinion by the assertion that the Act has been passed only to oust from power the Congress party which has mismanaged the Corporation and not to destroy the legitimate power and influence of the Hindu community. If this had been true, the number of Hindu seats would not have been curtailed nor steps taken to enhance the influence of reactionaries on the Corporation. To attain this object, a wedge need not have been driven into the Hindu community by making the provision that the ministry supported by the European-cum-reactionary Muslim combination was a better friend of the Scheduled Castes than their own brothers-in-faith, the caste Hindus. Besides if reform of the administration of the Corporation had been the motive, the Ministry would not have hesitated to consult the non-Congress leaders of the Hindu community over the provisions of the bill, to prove their bona fides. For it was well-known that not a few Hindus outside the group that had been ruling the Corporation for the last few years were dissatisfied with the manner in which the affairs of this self-governing body were being conducted.

The plain fact of the matter, therefore, cannot be concealed from the public with a miasma of special pleadings. The Muslim section of the Ministry and its European masters are out to deprive the Hindus of their legitimate dues and to establish their own domination over the civil affairs of the city. If the Act were calculated to enhance the hold of the Bengali Muslims on the Corporation, it would still be some satisfaction; for the Bengali Muslims, even though they unfortunately do not always recognise it, have a community of interests with the Bengali Hindus. But the Act in its present form will, as it will soon show in its working, prove highly prejudicial to the welfare of the Muslims of this province.

Here is, therefore, a matter in which the Hindus ought to get the solid support of their Muslim countrymen of Bengal in the fight against the Ministry. But whether that highly desired consummation happens or not, the Hindus cannot afford to take this blow to their position and influence lying down particularly as it is a precursor of worse things to happen.

We would invite the eminent leaders of the community to put their heads together without delay and devise ways and means for successfully resisting this pernicious legislative measure.¹

¹ For nearly four hours, the Assembly debated on 27 Feb. the Calcutta Municipal Amendment Bill introduced by the Government. The Bill declared that the practice of reserving Muslim seats in the general constituencies has failed to satisfy Muslims and so it reverts to separate electorates. The Bill increased Muslim seats from 19 to 22.

64. Minimum Wages Bill, CP and Berar

Hindu, 6 August 1939

... The opposition suffered a defeat by 64 votes to 24 when it pressed for a division Mr G.S. Page's motion for reference to a select Committee of the Minimum Wages Bill. The Bill proposed that every male labour shall be paid at least ten annas per day and every female labour six annas, and sought to restrict the hours of work to eight.

The Hon'ble Mr Bharuka, opposing the Bill, said that the Government were very sympathetic to labourers, but fixing the minimum wage for all parts of the province would tell on their industries, as they had to face keen competition, and if the rate of wages mentioned was applied to agricultural labourers, the whole agricultural structure would collapse. Further, if the Bill was passed, the Government would be required to spend Rs 40 lakhs more on industrial labour for their work.

65. (a) The Madras Temple Entry Authorization and Indemnity Bill, 1939 (L.A. Bill No. 17 of 1939), as passed by the Assembly

Madras Legislative Council Debates, Vol. 9, no. 1, 7-9 August 1939

The Hon. Sri C. Rajagopalachariar: Mr President, I move—

'that the Bill to authorize and indemnify trustees, officers and other persons in respect of entry into and offer of worship in Hindu temples by certain classes of Hindus who by customs or usage are excluded from such entry and worship (L.A. Bill No. 17 of 1939), as passed by the Assembly, be taken into consideration at once'.

I need hardly say, Sir, that the Bill is of great importance and I do hope that the House will give it its best consideration and pass it. The Bill has been thoroughly discussed in the Legislative Assembly and the discussions have been reported from time to time in the newspapers. The issues are well known, and some of them are very ancient issues and matters of longstanding public agitation. Opinions have been expressed from time to time on these issues for several years past. Certain momentous events took place in connection with this same matter, in 1932 and 1933. Hon. Members are aware of the great fast undertaken by Mahatma Gandhi when he was in prison at Poona and that the Secretary of State for India issued the 'award' as it is called, a decision in respect of franchise to the classes of Hindus known as the scheduled classes. Thereupon the whole question was thrashed out. The public mind throughout the length and breadth of the land was agitated over the issues raised and all communities came to consider the matter as one of the great land-marks in the history of the progress of our country. An agreement was arrived at in a solemn form by the Hindu community, if I may say so, among its various divisions and the franchise arrangements were settled in accordance with that agreement and the Secretary of State expedited and issued orders by special arrangements. Part and parcel of that arrangement were certain political adjustments. Equally as a part of that same solemn agreement entered into by the Hindu community was a reform in respect of the religious and social status of the scheduled classes.

The subject has been discussed from various points of view and I may well claim that it is now the unanimous opinion of thinkers on this subject that the reform in respect of the religious status is an essential part of the uplift movement of these classes. Unless religious status is put on a clear basis, social status has a tendency to remain just as it was; and unless social status is put on a clear basis of equality, political and economic status too have a tendency to lag behind, whatever people who do not attach the same amount of importance to religion as some of us might say. As a matter of fact, status depends on actual facts and not merely on theories; and the actual facts of social life, not only religious status, are matters that make a man equal or unequal, high or low. Equality of

religious status cannot be secured to the extent it is wanted, unless equality can be secured between man and man. I am referring to equality in a relatively practical sense. It is necessary to secure that equality, to secure proper and equal facilities for worship in the public Hindu temples, for the scheduled classes. In view of this, the temple entry movement as it is called was vigorously taken up from the time that I referred to, namely, 1932. It is not as if the movement had not been there in India before. It has been there for years; it has been there for centuries, I may say. The history of the various denominations of Hinduism shows various attempts in this direction, to lift up classes who had been previously consigned to a low status, to lift them up to an equal or nearly equal position with other classes. It is from time immemorial that we see this movement in the history of Hinduism in our country with varying degrees of success, with varying degrees of permanency and achievement secured from time to time. But we need not go to the very ancient history of this subject. I say that this temple entry movement was vigorously pursued, taken up and carried on from 1933. Various attempts were made to educate public opinion, All these attempts have been made by enthusiasts and participated in by the public also.

It has been stated very correctly that this is not to be identified with any particular party. This movement started surely too long ago to become the property or responsibility of any particular party. The agreement of 1932 that I referred to was not a party agreement; it was an agreement in which the entire Hindu community of all parties took part and took the responsibility and solemn pledges were given. I remind hon. Members here that Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and many others like him took a very great part—it may be stated an even more active part than some of those who may be called Congressmen of those days. It is not to be identified with any particular party and it is impossible even in the nature of things that it can be so identified either truly or profitably. No success can be achieved, if it is identified with any particular party. Of course from time to time things have re-arranged themselves; particular parties take particular interest in particular questions at particular moments. In that way there have been kaleidoscopic changes in such matters. I know that in matters of social reform, the party known as the Liberal School of politicians took priority. At a later time when some social changes took an aggressive form and after they became somewhat less desirable in the opinion of certain parties, the Congress has had to carry on some social changes. The Congress has had to take up some changes which were sought after by the Liberal School of Politicians. But these are merely kaleidoscopic re-arrangements in order to suit the particular time, circumstances and the varying parties of our politics. So far as this movement to give equal religious status to the Harijans along with other Hindus is concerned, it is very old. Surely the great Sankaracharya was not a Congressman; Ramanujacharya was not a Congressman; Vivekananda was not a Congressman; Dayananda Saraswati was not a Congressman. Thus it must be a fallacy to associate this reform with any particular school of politics; it is dangerous to do so. At the earliest stage of my arguments I must say that it is not correct to do so. It is a fallacy pure and simple, and we must put it aside.

Taking now the merits of the matter, as I said already, the issues are very plain. It is not as if Harijans are not now participating in the worship of these temples; they participate from outside; they participate very really, though not with greater fervour, at least with the same fervour as some people inside the precincts participate in the worship. It is not as if there is an isolation in the participation of worship between classes inside and the classes kept near the gateway. The participation is united. Those who know the details, the most interesting details of some of the items and ceremonies of worship and rituals carried on during festival occasions, can explain to others who do not know, how the Harijans sometimes take the most essential part in the ritual and ceremony of worship. For instance, if the Harijans kept away one day saying that they have nothing to do with a ritual or festival, that ritual or festival cannot begin at all, because it is laid

down according to tradition that a particular thing is to be done by a representative of the Harijan community. Until this is done, the items of worship cannot begin. That is necessary for the inauguration of some festivals. Many festivals include the community-part that is to be played by members of the Harijan community. I am referring to all this to show that a notion may possibly enter into the minds of those who are not Hindus or those who are not familiar with Hindu practices that these are denominational temples, that these classes of Hindus have been wholly kept outside for all time and that for the first time now these people are made to participate in the ceremonial and in the worship of these temples. That is wholly wrong, and therefore, it is that I refer to this aspect of the matter. It is all the same whether worship is done from one part of the temple or worship is done from another part of the temple. And so far as ancient temples and big temples are concerned, they are not the property of any particular person or persons; they began as the property of the whole nation. Today of course there are people who follow other religions, who form part of the nation and hence these things have come to be looked upon as institutions belonging to one part of the nation and not to the whole nation. But when they began, they were institutions belonging to the entire nation as a whole, and the Harijans took part in the worship at one point, while the other castes took part at other point and so on.

Today public policy, public welfare, commonsense and justice—all these demand the rearrangement of the position. It is impossible for any change to take place if we have things as they are. As I said already, Sir, there was a lot of agitation, especially during the last seven years. Let me confess that unless something is done, this agitation merely floats on the surface like oil on water; it does not mix, it does not get into the minds of the people, and people do not change their activities and things remain beautifully enough like oil on the surface of the water, ununited with the water. The agitation simply floats away on the surface and does not enter into the conscience of the people. But when something is done, then comes the fight, then comes the resistance, and then comes the real stirring up of conscience, and the agitation has then some reality. So, I say that action has to be concentrated upon, not merely stopped with discussion. We have had enough of discussions; public welfare demands that something should be done.

How is it to be done—that is the question? We passed an Act last year; we passed an Act by which we began with a certain district, and we said, 'Here, we shall follow this procedure; we shall take the opinion of the people and take their votes and if we get a majority, a trustee shall be bound to open the temple. The trustee will notify and arrange for the taking of the opinion, etc. That was done last year. The confusion in the arguments that I have heard in this connection is due to the fact that the Malabar Temple Entry Act is not intended to be repealed or given up; It is intended to be extended to all the districts. The method of ascertaining by votes, where the trustee depends upon public opinion and public opinion alone through taking votes, and where otherwise he is not prepared to take the responsibility himself—that method which is described in the Malabar Temple Entry Act and which is intended to be extended to other areas is still there; but the principle of the present Bill is something different, which I wish to explain. The principle of this Bill is to try a second method, to try a method by which we can get this thing done without the acerbities naturally roused by what may be called an election campaign, a ballot-box in some matters; it is an eminently suitable thing in some matters. But in the matter of religious practices, I have heard it said—and all reformers have heard it argued by those who opposed the reform—that the ballot box has no relevancy whatever in matters of this kind; that there is no use in taking opinion in these matters; this is not a thing that should be brought into the mire of democracy, as they would call it. Religion should be kept away from the ballot box. That was the argument of those who opposed these measures in the past, and it is the argument of those who still oppose such measures.

Therefore, a new method is suggested here. It is in the way. Before I explain that method, I should like to explain the rationale of it. What is it we are doing? If we are doubtful as to the justifiability of this measure, we may take the opinion of the people; we may take the opinion either of the people as a whole or of people in various places one by one, by what may be called the local option method. But if what is to be attained is admitted to be right, to be justifiable, that it is our goal and has to be accomplished, that we have promised it in fact and we have only to carry out the promise; if there is no doubt on the merits of that question, then what remains? In all matters, even in a matter where everybody has agreed that it is the right thing to do, we have to go into the question and bestow further consideration as to whether it is practical, how it is to be done, what is its feasibility, what difficulties it raises, how we are to overcome those difficulties—and that is the question now. I claim that the justifiability of the measures is no longer an open question. We must have the temples thrown open, and we must consider how to do it one way or another. The question of feasibility, the question of practicability, the question as to how we can reduce the evil by-products to the minimum—that is the question. And in solving this question, we have to find out various methods. I say, where it is possible to induce the trustees and the priests and those concerned, to receive this reform with a certain amount of tolerance, if not welcome, where the trustees and the worshippers and the priests can be reconciled to this thing, we have overcome one great difficulty and evil that may possibly result or which may possibly have to be faced in the progress of this reform. Because, as I have said already and admitted times without number, there is no reform possible unless it is agreed to, unless the ceremonial is kept intact, unless the religious sense is kept intact. This is not a thing in which I can say, 'I overrule you and I make it'. It is a thing that has to be done in a particular place. It is impossible to achieve the reform if the worship cannot be carried on properly. Therefore, the most important thing here is to retain intact the practicability of the day-to-day worship, to retain intact that much of tolerance and reconciliation to this reform which is an essential preliminary, which is the minimum necessary for keeping this reform in spirit. Therefore it is important to get the trustees, the priests and those who officiate, to reconcile themselves to this reform. Therefore, I say in this Bill the principle is, to start with: when they say, 'Yes, we are ready', we will go on. When they say, 'We are willing to do it,' then there is enough material here to carry on this thing properly and without discontinuity, without break. This is the justification for initiative being taken there. That is the principle of this Bill, and when they do that, then we consider, 'Is it wise? Have you got enough public backing behind you? That can be seen in one or two ways. When those who are generally irreconcilable are reconciled and when those priests who have to take a day-to-day and minute-to-minute part in it are reconciled, then the circumstances are favourable for the reform. I can imagine the position; if you go into a village, you have 80 people out of 100 in favour of it; but yet, the innocence of the other 20 people may be such that the thing cannot go on. It is the man who is responsible that can sense the value, the quantitative value that he has to give to each opinion or each vote; and he has to see and sense the feeling of the people around and come to a conclusion. If he comes to such a conclusion hastily, there again we have to check it; if he comes to the conclusion according to commonsense, without sufficient advertence to the votes around him, then only the check comes in. But the initiative and the responsibility belong to the trustees and it is only they that can judge and sense the atmosphere and the situation around. That is the principle of this Bill.

I have explained, Sir, the salient features of this Bill with reference to obvious objections that may be raised to it. It has to be accepted; and even then I say it is not the end of it. It is no doubt true that we can pass all the rules and this Bill containing these elements and these features that I have described, in a proper manner: we can say, 'Yes, the initiative may be taken by the trustees and the priests;' but still it is the officer, the trustee who is going to be returned to his post or

changed, it is he who has to sense the atmosphere, who has to see things in a practical form, to see that the devotion of the people is preserved. It has got to be put into practice. Will the trustees have the courage? Will it be followed up? Will anybody have the daring to take up the responsibility and the initiative? It may not be ultimately possible, unless the way is shown. That is why the Government follow what has been done during the last few weeks in regard to this matter. It has been done in some place; it has been shown against in some other place. The thing has started and hence there is fire enough for life to be put into a Bill. Otherwise it will be wooden; the Bill may no doubt be perfect; the rules, the forms and everything may be quite all right; but it will be merely a skeleton or a piece of wood. We find this has taken place during the last few weeks; if only a spark of real life, as distinguished from mere reason and mere jurisprudence is put into it, then the torch will be kept burning. Such a life is necessary for a reform of this kind; and the Government are keen on making use of that life, without allowing that spark of life to die out and simply create a skeleton afterwards and say, 'Here is a beautiful skeleton; it is possible for the people to put flesh and life into it; then the skeleton will become a wonderful man.' But it will not be anything more than a skeleton if we allow that spark to die out and go into darkness again. Therefore, we want to put life that has come up suddenly within the past few weeks, into this Bill, and to connect the two together. That is why this is an indemnity and authorization Bill. Indemnity is the life, if I may say so, and the authorization is the skeleton of the form that is to receive that life. If only this spark is to put the life into that form, then life will be a matter of fact.

Sir, I know there are legal talents, there is legal experience and there is legal consciousness enough in this House for any number of objections to be raised; objections to the effect that it is all irregular, wrong, unsystematic and that this is not the way to do it. I have faced arguments like that; they are familiar to me. It is not irregular now; it has been irregular, it has been unjust for centuries. This isolation, this segregation is simply an intolerable sin which has been committed all these years, and an irregular and intolerable thing like this cannot be scrapped simply by legal forms and rules. This untouchability is an octopus; it has got its tentacles all over our society, in every matter. If I travel in a railway train and have to bring my luggage down from the compartment, an untouchable boy offers to carry the things, and a touchable boy, if I may say so, comes and says, 'Sir, he is an untouchable, I am a touchable, therefore engage me.' That is what he says. Wherever we go, we see it, every walk of life is affected by this untouchability. A regular campaign to kill this octopus is difficult. A terrible thing like this with its tentacles everywhere has to be faced in a number of ways. I confess I cannot be logical in dealing with this; I confess I cannot be systematic and orderly in dealing with this question. When war was carried on in a chivalrous manner, it was enough for people to send a few compact regiments; but today war begins in the sky, in the water and in the well—prison everywhere. If it is spread all over like that, the defence also has to be like that—irregular. In the same manner is this untouchability to be faced in our country. It is most irregular; we can begin nowhere logically. If I begin in the house saying, 'Let me take a domestic servant from an untouchable family,' there will be the argument, 'Let him be admitted first to the well, into the school and lastly into the temple and then we can take into the house'. If I admit him into the temple, then people will say, 'Let him be admitted into the house and then he can enter into the temple.' Again, if I go to the school first, the argument will be, 'Let him be admitted into the house and then into the temple. What is the good of admitting him into the school? Why let the school go to the dogs? Why give education to this backward boy at the risk of driving out twenty brilliant boys belonging to other communities? Sir, it is impossible to face such things in a logical way; I admit it. If there is any other statement, if there is any other philosopher, if there is any administrator who is ready to tackle this subject and promise me that he will deal with it in a logical manner and will dispose of it before 1939 or 1940, and who says

‘You can keep quiet, I am ready to hand over the responsibility to such a gentleman. If there is no constructive offer or if there is no other hope of solving it in any other way, let me go on with this irregularity, with this illogicality and with all the confusing forces I propose to use in achieving the object and let me be helped in this matter; and then the object will be achieved and the name of our country and the name of our religion, which is greater than our country, will be saved from contumely throughout the world. I beg to move, Sir, that the Bill be taken into consideration.’

Sir T.C. Srinivasa Ayyangar:—Mr President, I am constrained to oppose the Bill, not because that this reform is not wanted, not because this reform is not desirable, not because that it is opposed by a very large section of the public, but because the events which have led to this Bill are somewhat abnormal and the legislative machinery has been invoked in regard to this in an abnormal manner. That is our concern. Sir, the Bill before the House deals with two subjects; one is the indemnity for the trustees who may take into their heads to commit a breach of the custom by allowing Harijans to worship and the other is to authorize the trustees, when they find it proper, to admit such people to worship.

So far as the question of the indemnity is concerned, I believe it particularly applies to the case of the officers who recently played a significant part in Madura. Of course, I am not going to say whether the fact and circumstances regarding the part that was played by them are correctly stated or not and I do not wish to trouble the House with reference to that aspect. As has been already observed by the Hon. Premier, a very considerable amount of controversy has arisen, statements and counter-statements were issued and they all appeared in the press, and I do not think I can add anything useful on this occasion. However, it is really a strange phenomenon that in modern times a divine vision in favour of admission has dawned upon our Government appointed trustees and executive officers and in one single place and that too within a week after some very eminent men gathered here. You may draw your own inference; there it is. The question is indemnity. There is no need for indemnity when there is irregularity, illegality or improper or unjustifiable action. Lawyers and legislators are of course familiar with the circumstances when an indemnity is granted. Where a sudden emergency has arisen in which the officers entrusted with the duty of preserving the peace of the public or saving human life or other similar matters are obliged to take action suddenly and they cannot have sufficient time to consult their superiors, and in that emergency they have exceeded their powers or are obliged to take action which may be disproportionate; it is in such cases that an indemnity is required. But here, what is the emergency that has overtaken? What was the overpowering duty impelling these officers? Surely, these executive officers have their superior officers; there is the Religious Endowment Board and its officers and there is also one of the Ministers in charge of the department. Had there been no time to telegraph to them; did the telegraph wires in Madura refuse to function and did the post become paralysed? Then, what was the difficulty in the matter, was there at all a duty on these officers? Instead of asking them for an explanation as to why they were obliged to do such an act and why they failed to obtain orders previously, Government have come forward with this indemnity Bill. Now indemnity for this; tomorrow indemnity for something else; where are we to begin and where are we to stop? Now, Sir, it looks as if some energetic officer more in enthusiasm than in discretion has committed some acts outside the range of his duties, but an appreciative superior authority, which no doubt was overwhelmed till then with consideration of what I may call many difficulties, suddenly thought that here is an officer who is heroic enough to do this and that so he deserves our support, and the legislature is now called upon to indemnify that act. A great deal has been said about this reform. While I oppose the Bill let me not be misunderstood if I say that some of us at any rate are not against this reform; some of us do require that reform but not in this form or manner. But a custom has been in existence with some of its ugly features and with a great deal

of its rigours. A large amount of conciliation is necessary. There are some people who know, perhaps those coming from that district in which recent events took place, might remember that riots took place in South Madura, West Ramnad and in the northern and eastern parts of Tinnevely, in which considerable loss of life and property resulted over a similar matter. The districts were then partly under military or punitive police occupation. A special Commissioner was appointed for some time for the two districts of Tinnevely and Madura and I believe that officer was Sir Murry Hammick. Several additional courts were created for the disposal of cases arising out of these riots; punitive police were for a long time, quartered in Kamudi and Sivakasi. That was the state of affairs then. Now, I believe, due to agitation, due to reforming tendencies and due to the good sense of the people that the reform was wanted a very desirable change has come over the people. If today the Hon. Premier has been enabled to successfully issue an ordinance and also bring in this Bill, by avoiding riots and all that, I say it is all due not to these things, but as I said earlier, it was due to the good sense of the people that the riots, etc. of the olden times did not take place (hear, hear). I am glad to hear that that aspect of Madura sensibility has been appreciated. It might have been better if the events of 8th July has not happened and conciliatory propaganda prevailed. Things would have progressed much more by the 8 July 1940. I may ask, Sir, why suddenly a particular time was chosen, between two poojas in the early part of the day when generally the temple is not very populous, the bulk of the regular pujaris being away and certain people who are concerned in the matter were kept in readiness and all these things have taken place. It may be a praiseworthy act on the part of the persons concerned; but from the point of view of the regular worshipping public it is not the correct method. The two sections of the people should be brought together in such a way in which the Harijans are no longer the depressed classes and the caste men are no longer to be the sort of persons who will look upon the other section as if they are in an untouchable condition. After all what is the value of all this if temple entry is effected in this way; with the usual temple goers being in effect shunted out and people who are till now excluded from the temples being shunted in and in fact led in by three or four leading men.

Sir, apart from the more conservative of the public who are against temple entry altogether and the reformers who under all circumstances and at any time and in every manner want temple entry, there is a large body of people whose opinions are very favourable and who are coming round and they are all shocked and amazed at the manner and the method of entry. On the 8th July, to hours after this intrusion, if I may call it—because it is not entry but it is intrusion—has taken place, people were stunned and the result has been, people who have been really affected are the habitual temple-goers and they have mostly ceased to go to temples. Now we have this Indemnity Bill. No civil authority has broken down, the military has not taken charge nor had any one to rely upon the muskets and swords to bring back the situation under control, or for the civil authority, again to take charge of the matter. No Indemnity Bill was required. Now, Sir, only a few months back we enacted the Malabar Temple Entry measure and it received very considerable support from this House and it also received very considerable support from the public. So, it cannot be said that the people were hypocritical in supporting the Government. I told you, Sir, that some 45 years ago many lives were lost and several people lost their property, lots of towns and villages were affected because angry passions were provoked and it required military and punitive police to bring the situation under control. The situation has since improved much. It cannot, therefore, be said that the reform is not progressive and the public are against it. No chance was given for the method of ascertaining the progress of public opinion. What we are against is in regard to the illegal methods adopted and the law being enacted in a peculiar way....

The Rt. Hon. V.S. Srinivasa Sastri:—‘Sir, when I first read in the papers that the Hon. Premier has promised legislation to indemnify the principal actors in the drama at Madura on the 8th July, I felt that while there would be very general agreement as to the aim that should be attained, there could not be the same agreement as to the means that we propose. I fear it might be my duty to accuse the Premier of having forgotten, in his enthusiasm for a certain reform, the golden rule that in public matters of primary importance the means are just as valuable as the end, and an administrator charged with the responsibility of ruling the affairs of a Province ought to be very careful that he did nothing even by way of promoting a great aim which might be questioned. Today, Sir, the Hon. the Premier has made a speech in which he has openly admitted that he is bringing in this Bill regardless of law, regardless of form, regardless of regularity and regardless of those ordinary restraints that bind those who handle public affairs. I did not expect at all that he would make so bold, if I may say so, so bare-faced, a claim to adopt any means to secure an end which he had, may be in his mind right and proper. I am not one of those who think, as I said before, that he does not justify the Bill; but we must be very careful, very scrupulous, very tender as to the means as employ, for we are here not to achieve a triumph for the day, but to achieve a triumph that lasts and to achieve it in ways and by measures that will stand the test of public scrutiny and public criticism. I may venture another word on this head. I can say that the Mahatma will deplore any action on the part of his followers, on the part even of any of his friends like me, which seemed to proceed on the assumption that so long as there was a growing grievance, so long as there was a grievance universally admitted to be such, it did not matter what we did, provided we knocked that grievance on the head. It does matter, Sir, a good deal. And I would venture to say today one or two things in justification of this proposition that the proposed means do exalt the means of the Opposition to which they are not entitled.’

The Hon. Sri C. Rajacopalachariar:—‘Exalt the ends?’

The Rt. Hon. V.S. Srinivasa Sastri:—‘Exalt the means to which they are not entitled.’

Mr President, I must first say a word of personal explanation like others. I am a friend of the temple entry movement and I am very anxious that the reform should be effected with the least possible delay and with the least possible harm to the general harmony of the community. I am not in any way a social reformer, I never have been, but what are we about to do? We are invited to employ for this great purpose a machinery of administration known as “indemnity legislation.” I know, Sir, that our friend opposite and the Harijan community say that they do not care for precedent, that they are doing something never before attempted in the history of the world and therefore a mere example quoted from history or previous administration will not be able to help even though repeated in different tunes. If an indemnity legislation is undertaken, some of us would like to examine what an indemnity legislation is generally intended for, what its real nature is and whether the circumstances of the moment and the purposes for which it is intended to be applied are such as will justify a resort to this extreme measure as an indemnity. In my time there has been in India a great Bill of indemnity. There has also been a great Bill of validation. I was present when that Indemnity Bill was passed through the Indian Legislative Council. Sir, that Indemnity Bill, like other indemnity Bills known to history, was undertaken for the purpose of giving protection to the officers of the Government who had been employed under the authority of the Government to quell a widespread and deep disturbance which involved loss of life and loss of property on a colossal scale. Officers employed on their duty were no doubt performing their legal functions, but it would have been impossible for them to avoid certain things which exceeded the law and which exceeded the necessities of the case. That was the very nature of their task. Every now and then many difficult circumstances would arise and those executive officers would be unable to ascertain whether the action that they proposed to do in that emergency was right

and was within their competence or that of the Government. In such cases, it is no wonder that many an officer let himself open to attack in courts of law. Any Government on such an occasion would like to prevent their officers from being arraigned for damages or terms of imprisonment the courts may award. An indemnity Bill is undertaken upon such occasions. To protect officers employed by Government on lawful duties, but being obliged by the very necessity of their occupation here and there, inadvertently to transgress the provisions of the law—an indemnity in such circumstances is justifiable; we know of such. In the present instance, was there a disturbance in Madura which the officers of the Government and the trustees and other people were called upon to quell? Were they engaged in the task that I have described, and were they likely in the discharge of that legal duty now and then to lose the propriety enjoined on them? Nothing of the kind, Sir. The disturbers of the peace were the officers of the Government and the trustees initially, and later on they were the people who did harm to the peace at Madura. I do not say he ordered it; I do not say he wanted it in ways obnoxious to the morality or general principles of propriety. But they were the people who disturbed the regular order of things. I saw from certain statements made by the Hon. Premier that they were not acting under the orders of the Government. And yet the Government go to their protection and invoke this machinery intended for one purpose for a quite different purpose in which the people of two schools of opinion in social and religious matters were involved and had exposed themselves to pains and penalties such as were involved there. I venture to state, Sir, that this is a perversion, a gross abuse of the principle of indemnity legislation known to the practice of Governments heretofore. (hear, hear).

But there are other important aspects to be considered and I do not want to dwell too long upon this. The Premier makes, it seems to me, a great mistake in claiming for a good cause such as he has more than its due. In making statements to a general audience like this, composed it may be seven-eighths of his own followers and one-eighths at least of people of a different way of thinking, it is not open to him, it is not wise on his part, to lay claims which may be challenged. For instance, to the arrangement come to in the year 1932 in Poona he has been in the habit of assigning an importance which does not belong to it. He calls it—and I know other people like him have called it—a pledge binding on the Hindu community of India. Certain very important and leading Hindus were present; many influential Hindus lent their support to that document. Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and many others whose names are not less important than his, gave this undertaking. We know, Sir, that that was obtained under a sort of moral coercion. They agreed to certain things in such circumstances and no one will forget, Mr President, how in Bengal the entire Hindu community repudiates that pact. It has done such injustice to the Hindu community and put them in a position of inferiority in Bengal. They say they were not consulted properly; they have no time to consider the matter at all, and they are now suffering the consequences of a pact which was enforced upon them in circumstances over which they could not exercise proper control. That is a disability under which the promoters of that contract laboured. I think it is well to remember that fact and not thrust it upon all sorts of people. There is an understanding which we must carry out. It is not possible to give it that paramount claim. I was not present at the time, but I am quite willing to state that I will not stand up on a platform and say that it was upon all grounds just and proper, that it was based upon an all-round consideration of the very complex and difficult issues involved and that it is entitled to be in law binding on everybody. When we advocate claims we must pitch them at the proper level. Otherwise they are open to challenge.'

'Now I have to put a question beforehand. The Hon. Premier will not mistake my feelings and words. I am only putting forward arguments, but as is my habit I show my hands and I seem to turn this way and that. Do not suppose that I am under the influence of a violent emotion of antipathy to this measure or anything of that sort. Now, Sir, the Hon. Premier the other day said in

another place that he had to get an ordinance issued and get it approved because the Legislature was not then in session and there was great hurry. It is perfectly true. I am not against his having taken an ordinance for this purpose at all. In fact I said to many of my friends that he was perfectly justified in getting an ordinance issued. But he said that the Legislature was not in session, and he half-playfully turned to the Speaker and said, 'You were not then, Sir, within easy reach.' I do not know where the Speaker was at the time. (An Hon. Member: 'At Simla.') Well, Mr President, the Legislature of Madras has two Houses. If the Speaker was away and the time taken for a telegram to reach him may be four hours, where had the President of the legislative Council gone?' (An hon. Member: 'He was there too.') (Laughter)

The Hon. Sri C. Rajagopalachariar:—'It does not affect your argument'.

The Rt. Hon. V.S. Srinivasa Sastri:—'Was it not possible to get at these people and ask them to come down for this paramount purpose? Was it not possible?'

Mr President:—'No.'

The Rt. Hon. V.S. Srinivasa Sastri:—'Your duties were such that you would not have remained'.

Mr President:—'The Conference had been arranged on particular dates. So we could not come back.'

The Rt. Hon. V.S. Srinivasa Sastri:—'Mr President, I must accept your word. Still I believe that if the Prime Minister had cried out for succour and sent his SOS, you would not have said, 'I am doing very important work.'...'

The Rt. Hon. V.S. Srinivasa Sastri:—'... The ease with which an improper method is adopted for the securing of a great reform is one of the great dangers to which the Congress majority must be sternly alive. The majority must shake itself every moment and say, 'I am too powerful in the land. I have crushed all opposition. There is nobody there to say me "Nay." Double and treble therefore is my responsibility.' When they take one step forward they must look about and care for the small and lean man more than they would care for a brother member. Restrained by such considerations, the Prime Minister would not have brought this Bill either to the Assembly or to this House.' (Applause.)

Dr Sir K.V. Reddi Nayudu:—'Mr President, at the very outset, permit me to say that I wholeheartedly support the Bill. As one who has given his assent to the Malabar Temple Entry Bill, I have no other course. At this stage, if I may call this a stage after the masterly speech delivered so admirably by the hon. Member was vehement, and though I too can be vehement, I cannot claim to reach that diction, that style and that reasoning power of the hon. Gentleman who holds such a high position in society. Sir, we have a duty to perform here; we have a duty to our country, a duty to ourselves which does not permit us to sit in silent admiration in which I have been caught to a certain extent. And I have felt that the speech, logical as it is, reasonable as it is, is yet lacking in what may be said a scheme, or a plan, or an alternative scheme. It may be true, perfectly true perhaps, that the Hon. Premier both in his speeches and the very form in which he has brought this bill before us, in the very fact of his having obtained an ordinance from the Governor, lays himself open to criticism. But what is the remedy? Both my esteemed friend and Mr Srinivasa Ayyangar and many other outside this House have told us from the houses tops, from the platforms and in the Press. "We are entirely in favour of temple entry". And my esteemed friend has gone further, "Centuries have rolled by, ages have gone by, why can you not wait for one or two years more?" Is my friend certain that if this Bill is not pressed now, the matter could be settled in one or two years? What is the guarantee that some more ages, some more centuries will not hereafter roll by without justice being done, without this injustice being relieved, admittedly going on for centuries? Somebody will have to take the things into his hands. Let me say that the Hon. Premier has taken the courage into his hands, withstood the criticism that has been leveled against him,

taking the blame upon himself, the blame to the effect that he is illogical, that his methods were not all those that have been hitherto approved. But, Sir, somebody will have to do it. And he has done it.'

'We want, Sir, what is just. I have opposed the Hon. Prime Minister on several occasions,—perhaps I can claim to be the worst critic in this House—on very, very important Bills on which he had set his heart. I go a step further, I am going to criticize him hereafter as well if I feel the need for it, if my conscience tells me that he is wrong—eventually he may be right, and I may be wrong. But on this particular occasion our friends who have criticised the Hon. Prime Minister have not given us an alternative remedy. It is all well and good to say that the indemnity or the reasons for indemnity are not similar to those that have been used hitherto. There has been no breach of the peace on the part of the *Harijans* or on the part of the orthodox people in order to indemnify these officers or the Endowment department or the officers of the temple. But what is the remedy? Is the Hon. Prime Minister after all this profusely expressed sympathy to hand them over to these courts of law, submit the people on the one side and officers on the other to all the hardships and the expenditure which we know to be the result to all these litigations? And after all, this is not the first time that the Prime Minister expressed his opinion on the matter. When he brought the other Bill the principle has been accepted by both the Houses of Legislature. With what grace, with what sense of justice, with what sense of responsibility can the Hon. Prime Minister hold his hands and sit tight and say, "let the courts decide"? Twenty years ago, no doubt, some things happened. Worse things happened. My esteemed friend from Madura was giving us a very graphic description of the murders that took place but the very fact that no murder has taken place on this occasion, the very fact that a single blow has not been dealt to the Commissioner or to these depressed classes, that the *bhattars* were willing to render the services in the temples, when these people went in... (Interruption.)

'That leads me to the other question—public opinion and numbers. Well, we all know what numbers are. We all know what public opinion is. But yet that public opinion cannot be altogether ignored. It is true that it is the educated section in this country, most of them English-educated, that create opinion in this land and shape public opinion. It is true that the gentlemen sitting on the other side are there to create public opinion. It is equally true some feeble public opinion is always tried to be created on this side. Our newspapers also create some public opinion. But to say that it is a real public opinion, that it is such as exists in Europe or America, is not correct. There are millions of men, millions of women who have absolutely not heard the words 'public opinion' in this country. And yet, Sir, we have to progress. We have to get on. We have to remedy wrongs, admittedly age long wrongs. And where is the wonder in this?

'I was reading in the Press a speech to the effect that the Hon. Prime Minister did not care a fig for the sanatanists' feelings. *Sanatana dharma* is unchangeable, history tells us. But there is a misreading of history. *Sanatana dharma* has existed from the time of the Vedas, from the time of the Upanishads, right up to our time. But every year, almost at any rate in every generation, there has been change after change coming over. Have Hon. Members forgotten the story of the man who afterwards became the Prime Minister of Delhi, the *shastraic* adviser of Janamejaya who found that the marriage was so loose that it was not *Sanatana dharma*? He only just wanted to know whether a woman in the house.... It was the house and the son objected to it. The father said, "My son, it is right." Will any Hindu admit that today? Was it not abolished, Sir, in the times of Janamejaya himself? Then, what about the numerous things that have happened? Does *Sanatana dharma*, for instance, say that a marriage should be performed only by a Brahman? Twenty years ago when I performed the marriage of my daughter, articles appeared in the newspapers because I did not call in a Brahman *purohit* but I called a non-Brahman *purohit* for the purpose. We were told that

the marriage was illegal. (Laughter) We were told that the child will be illegitimate. We were told that the parents' property will not go to the offspring of the marriage. But, Sir, the reform has been silently effected. Not only that marriage, but subsequent marriages in my house and for that matter in the houses of many of my friends have been performed by a non-Brahman *purohit*. What became of the *Sanatana dharma* there? And why should not similar rules apply here, when the nation finds that a particular section reserves to itself the rights which ought to belong to the entire nation as has been stated by the Hon. Prime Minister, when the nation finds that some people—standing unjustly and wickedly between man and his God, say, “I will not allow you to approach the God?”

‘My friend stated that he does not attend temples. Sir, in my own humble way I do attend temples. Perhaps there is not a single temple in the whole of Southern India which I have not visited. And there is not a single occasion in my own town of Rajahmundry that I did not actually go to the temple and worship there. I am not boasting; it is a fact. Everybody knows it. And if any doubt is felt in the matter and if I may mention it, I may say that Lady Kurma is also a regular worshipper in temple. I was obliged to say that to show that there are men who actually attend these temples, who know and feel it very strongly.’

‘There is the grave injustice done to these persons. Our friends admit that. But with all the profusion of sympathy they come forward to oppose a Bill like this. They do not suggest an alternative. I do not myself suspect their sincerity but the general public will not be unjustified, cannot be said to be unreasonable, if they begin to suspect the sincerity of those who profess sympathy and yet stand in the way of remedies sought. Sir, agreeing with my friend, Mr Srinivasa Ayyangar, I should have been very pleased indeed if the Hon. Prime Minister took the courage in both his hands and straightaway said, “Well, this nonsense will not do. I will not allow it. Here is a decree from the Government of Madras, assisted by the parliament legally constituted. There shall not be any objection for any depressed classes man to come in.” That would have been a straight course and a very reasonable course, too. But unfortunately, or fortunately as I would say, he has become too cautious. On occasions, if you will pardon me the word, he is too rash. But on this occasion he is particularly cautious. He does not want to create any row in the country. (Laughter) He does not want that the priests should refuse to work if these Harijans are permitted. He does not want to hurt the feelings of the sanatanists and as my esteemed friend has spoken, both the Hon. Prime Minister and his principal critic today belong to that class. There is the trouble, there is the rub. Sir, if the old saying is true that “half a loaf is better than no bread at all,” I for one, Sir, cannot think of opposing this Bill.’

‘My esteemed friend’s second suggestion was—that was a sort of alternative: why not pass your law straightaway and throw open all the temples? That was what Mr Srinivasa Ayyangar said. The second suggestion that was thought perhaps more reasonable was: why not appoint a committee, a committee of respectable men, erudite men, consisting both of sanatanists and reformers and the middle course men like my Hon. Friend there, and then come to some decision? Sir, I remember having heard it said in this Council or elsewhere that the best way of consigning a problem to the archives of the State is to appoint a committee. It is admitted that this is an age-long wrong. It is admitted that for centuries and centuries this injustice has been going on and when at last a man rises and says, ‘I will do this,’ I think, Sir, it is very unfair, very unjust, contrary to your own conscience, and contrary to the progress of the nation to oppose it. Do they expect this country will ever remain like this—the sanatanists? Do they expect that they can stand between man and God in the temples? Do they expect that they can have all the proceeds from the temples by whatever means may be—endowments on the one hand, gifts on the other and vows and all

that kind of things? Well, Sir, the spirit of the times does not allow it. We have progressed up to a certain stage when it is impossible to halt. You cannot but do this reform.'

'There are others who remind us that this particular reform is quite essential. Everybody admits without any exception that a great wrong is done to the depressed classes in their not being allowed entry into temples. So if this reform is not done, and if I object to this reform, I would be failing in my duty and the nation would be failing in its duty.'

The House then adjourned to meet again at 11 am the next day.

(b) Temple Entry for Harijans: Tirupati Advisory Council's Protest

Hindu, 9 August 1939

The Religious Advisory Council, constituted under the Tirumalai-Tirupati Devasthanams Act, which met last evening under the presidency of Srīman Archakam Seshachalam Dikshatar, President and one of the mirasi Archakas of Sree Venkateswara Temple, at Tirumalai Hills, protested against the entry of Harijans into temples.

The President read out the letter of the Sixth Acharyapurusha of the Temple, Sreeman D.S.K. Desikachariar, regarding temple-entry addressed to the Commissioner, Tirumalai-Tirupati Devasthanams, and which had been forwarded by the Commissioner for opinion to the Religious Advisory Council.

The President of the Council said that the Tirumalai Hill itself had been declared by sastras to be a sacred one and that Harijans, Christians, Muslims were not to be allowed even to ascend the Hills and even the Government had observed the sentiments mentioned in Sastras and issued orders to that effect. Such being the case, he added, the Harijans should not be permitted to ascend the Hills, even though they might enter the temples in other places.

His Holiness Sree Periya Jeerswami, Dharmakarthā of the temples and a member of the Council, also stated that Harijans, Christians and Mussalmans should not ascend the Hills. He spoke at length on the usage and custom of the temples and vehemently protested against the entry into temples by Harijans.

The Council unanimously passed a resolution protesting against the entry into temples by Harijans.

c) S. Srinivasa Iyengar's Views on Temple-Entry Bill

Hindu, 15 August 1939

Mr Srinivasa Iyengar then spoke on the temple entry question. 'I am absolutely and without any qualification in favour of temple entry for Harijans,' he said, 'and I have myself in the old days taken Harijans into temples openly. I think the Hindu community, as a whole should welcome this reform. The Hindu religion gains in strength by it and as a religious reformer, I am entirely in favour of this reform. But at the same time I am absolutely against it as a political reform and I am totally against it if a person wishes to make a political stunt of it. As a political man, I must say that the State must be neutral. It should not interfere, either by coercion or by any other way, such as legislation, with the religious beliefs of the people. I am opposed to any legislation by a State on this matter. Religion and politics must not be mixed, however holy the cause may be.

'Temples are places,' the speaker continued. 'where ritualistic and congregational worship is being carried on and what is wanted is the identity of those caste people who believe in that worship and the members of the Scheduled Classes who equally believe in ritualistic Hinduism

and congregational worship. The bringing together of people, who do not believe in ritualistic Hinduism and congregational worship and who are mere politicians, and others will be of no effect. It will effect no real change of heart in the Hindu community'.

Identity of Religious Feeling Wanted

Proceeding, Mr Srinivasa Iyengar said that in these times most of the people were indifferent to religion and he was afraid that if to-day the temples were opened, it was due to other causes and not to a sincere awakening of religious consciousness that would embrace the Adi-Dravidas. It might be merely a sort of indifference. The real way in which this reform should be effected should be 'to bring together those caste people who go to the temples and who believe in rituals and congregational worship, and the orthodox Adi-Dravidas, who equally believe in that kind of devotion'. The present legislation would not, he was afraid, bring about a real change of heart and there was no reason to congratulate themselves upon this legislation. What was wanted most was that identity of religious feeling between the two. Legislation would not bring about this identity.

66. Madras Devadasis (Prevention of Dedication) Bill, 1939:

(a) The Proposal

Hindu, 8 August 1939

Miss G. Ammanna Raja¹ moved that the Madras Devadasis (Prevention of Dedication) Bill be referred to a Select Committee.

Miss Ammanna Raja said that the system of dedicating girls, including minors sometimes, to temples was an evil which had no sanction in Hindu religion but yet was widely prevalent and was practised in the name of Hindu religion. That this was an evil which should be eradicated was recognised long ago and several attempts were made through resolutions and public education to cope with the evil. The existing law was neither prohibitory nor penal so that the evil continued to prevail. There was a growing consciousness in the members of the Devadasi community themselves against the practice and several of them had expressed themselves in favour of the reform. Many people still honestly believed that the practice of dedication to temples—and eventually it was consigning the poor girls to a life of prostitution—had religious sanction. It was, the member said, only through legislation that they could check the evil.

Miss Raja continued that Mahatma Gandhi had once expressed the view that the ending of this evil was an even more urgent reform than Prohibition and Pandit Malaviya had characterised the practice as 'irreligious and sinful'. Enlightened opinion was definitely opposed to the dedication of girls to temples, which was against all principles of morality, humanity and social justice. Miss Ammanna Raja, therefore, appealed to the House to lend wholehearted support to the Bill.

Srimati Kuttimalu Amma, in seconding the motion, said that while the dedication of one's life to the service of God was something divine, the present system of dedication was of such a nature as to shock everybody. Young girls, who were made to feel that they were doing something divine and something right, were misled into a life of shame. It was high time to stop such a state of things. She hoped that the party which proudly claimed Mahatma Gandhi, the personification of purity, as its head, would help to place this Bill on the Statute Book and help the young girls to lead a life of service to the community and to their Motherland.

The hon. Mr C. Rajagopalachariar, Prime Minister who had given notice of a motion for the circulation of the Bill, said that he did not wish to move it. He would, however, suggest to the mover of the Bill that the Select Committee might be formed and that the Bill might be proceeded

with at another sitting of the House. The interval would give an opportunity to the public to express their opinion.

The motion to refer the Bill to a Select Committee was agreed to.

¹ Miss G. Ammannappa Raja (later Chodagam) (1909–99): Born at Machilipatnam, resident of Eluru in West Godavari District; daughter of G. Virayya Naidu; wife of Janardhana Rao; worked as a teacher at Madras from 1933 to 1936, when she resigned job and took to politics; Member, Madras Legislative Assembly, 1937. Represented the Assembly seat of the Andhra University Senate; took part in the Individual Satyagraha movement; Sentenced to one year's imprisonment in 1940, interned in the Vellore Jail; Deputy Speaker, Madras Legislative Assembly, 1946–52; Member PCC and AICC, closely connected with women's welfare in the state, of women in all fields, particularly education; served as the Chairperson of State Council for Women's Education; Member of Parliament (Rajya Sabha), 1962–8; Member, Andhra Pradesh State Advisory Committee for Freedom Fighters' Pension Scheme, 1974–6.

(b) An Appeal (by Dr Mrs Muthulakshmi Reddy¹)

Hindu, 6 August 1939

Dr (Mrs) S. Muthulakshmi Reddy writes:

I read in *the hindu* of the 28th July of Srimathi Ammannappa Raja's notice of a motion to refer her Bill (The Prevention of Dedication Bill) to a Select Committee and along with it the notice of an amendment in the name of the Premier to have the Bill circulated for public opinion. This latter motion takes us by surprise.

Public opinion has more than once pronounced its verdict upon this reform in the temples. This very same Bill as well as other kindred Bills have been circulated more than once and opinions have been collected both by the Central Government and by the Local Government and legislation has been undertaken more than once to suppress this evil. This Bill is only a supplementary one to complete the previous legislative efforts. At this moment a short history of this legislation will not be out of place.

Human lives are short and human memories are shorter still. The agitation by the enlightened Hindu public for the suppression of this evil has been going on since 1868. Even as early as 1895 in the pre-Montagu-Chelmsford days a law was passed to punish dedication of minor girls below the age of 16, as the decisions of the High Court show. This law had been evaded both by the temple authorities as well as the guardians of the girls for the reason that the ceremony of dedication was allowed in the temples after the girls attained the age of 16 and the devadasi service was also kept up.

History of Legislation

When signing the International Convention for the suppression of immoral traffic in women and children, the Government of India began to interest themselves in this question of devadasi legislation and called for reports from the various Local Governments to ascertain the extent and character of the evil. Then in 1912 three Bills were introduced in the Central Assembly and circulated to the Local Governments for eliciting public opinion, which was all in favour of this reform, and the Government of India drafted a Bill which was referred to a Select Committee in 1913. Then after 1914 owing to the intervention of war nothing was done until 1922 when a resolution was unanimously adopted in the Central Assembly 'to prohibit the wholesale traffic in minor girls for immoral purposes ostensibly intended as devadasis but in reality used for indiscriminate immoral purposes' as a consequence of which an Act (Act 18 of 1924) was passed raising the age of girls to 18 in the Indian Penal Code provisions 372 and 373. These penal code provisions having been successfully evaded for the same reason that the temples still allowed the dedication of girls and

the devadasi service, young women after the age of 18 were dedicated as the idea that actuated dedication was neither religious service nor devotion, but purely carrying on a profitable trade in vice.

After the granting of women's franchise and the entry of women into the Legislature, women began to take an active interest in this reform. On the 5th November 1927, the first woman member of the Madras Legislative Council moved a resolution as follows:

'This Council recommends to the Government to undertake legislation... at a very early date to put a stop to the practice of dedicating young women to Hindu temples which has generally resulted in exposing them to an immoral life.'

It was unanimously adopted by that Council as the direct consequence of which a Bill was introduced by her and passed into law as an amendment to the Hindu Religious Endowments Act to dispense with the Devadasi service in the temples and thus put an end to the dedication of girls.

Limitations of 1929 Act

The Act of 1929 being merely an amendment to the Hindu Religious Endowments Act is found in actual practice to be limited in its scope and in its application even though the object of the mover was to stop entirely the evil practice.

The reasons are: In the first place, the above Act (The Madras Act No.5 of 1929) does not apply to all the temples in the Presidency, for example, the city temples are exempted from the operation of this Act, and so also some other temples in this Presidency.

Secondly, there are a large number of Devadasis who do not hold any Inams and do not render any service in any temple, but still are allowed by the temple authorities to dedicate girls and young women as a matter of custom and hereditary right solely for the purpose of prostitution.

Thirdly, the Madras Act is neither prohibitive nor penal as in Mysore, Cochin, Travancore and Bombay, but is only a permissive legislation and leaves the option of service in the temples to the Devadasis themselves with the result that only in certain temples have the Devadasis freed themselves from the obligation of service; but in most others, the Act has not been availed of for the reasons that in some cases the devadasis continue their hereditary association with the temples, while in others the temple authorities force them to continue and even persecute them if they refuse to serve. On enquiry and investigation we find that this practice is still widely prevalent in most of the centres of pilgrimage like Conjeevaram, Tiruvannamalai, Kumbakonam, Tanjore, Srirangam etc.

A bill similar to the present one was introduced in 1929 and has been circulated and has received enthusiastic support from all sections of the public. Now in the face of these facts one is unable to understand the need for further circulation of the Bill. This is a chronic question. All the facts collected either through evidence or through circulation are available in the Legislative Council office. The public have said their say on this subject and it is only left for expert and experienced legislators like the Premier and his colleagues to give a proper shape to the bill.

What the States have Done

In this connection I may point out that in the adjoining States of Mysore, Cochin and Travancore the Government have entirely prohibited the dedication of girls and devadasi service in the State temples. The Mysore Government have stated in their order that they are not prepared to allow the performance of the Gajje Puja ceremony in their temples inasmuch as it has an intimate connection with dedication to the profession of a prostitute of a dancing girl.

What was written by Gandhiji on the devadasi system a few years ago still remains true to-day: 'Indeed I do not think that the proposed legislation will be in advance of public opinion. The

whole of the enlightened public opinion that is vocal is against the retention of the system in any shape or form. The opinion of the parties concerned in the immoral traffic cannot count just as the opinion of keepers of opium dens will not count in favour of their retention, if public opinion is otherwise against them. The devadasi system is a blot upon those who countenance it. It would have died long ago but for the supineness of the public. Public conscience in this country somehow or other lies dormant. It often feels the awfulness of many a wrong, but is too often indifferent or too lazy to move.... Such legislation might well have been brought earlier. In any case I hope that this will receive the hearty support of all lovers of purity in religious and general social life.'

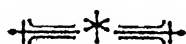
Complete Prohibition Necessary

The previous attempts at putting an end to this practice of dedication having been indirect, have failed to achieve the desired results because they did not deal with dedication as whole. After the girls attain 18 years of age, and in the mofussil even minor girls, are dedicated because the temple authorities, the parents and the general public honestly feel that religion sanctions it and the law is not absolutely against it. What we have learnt from the past history of this legislation is that the ceremony of dedication should be completely prohibited in all places of worship so as to take away the seal on immoral traffic and thus educate the temple authorities, the parents or guardians of the girls and also the general public that the temples or religion do not sanction or tolerate any association with vice and immorality.

So long as this devadasi system continues, it is a positive danger to all destitute orphan girls and women, to whatever caste or community they may belong. While a certain section of these classes of people gets reformed, other girls and young women are procured for the purpose and so the system is kept alive. Therefore, urgent legislation is called for to put an end to this evil inasmuch as the Government have recently placed on the Statute-book a law to punish those who live on the earnings of prostitution.

I hope that the Congress Government will rise to the height of its responsibilities on this occasion and assert in unmistakable terms, in the interests of the children of this country, that it is anxious that no time should be lost in placing on the Statute-book a salutary measure sufficiently strong to prevent this evil, which has been rampant in this Presidency.

¹ Reddy S. Muthulakshmi (1886-1956); born in Pudukottah, she was the first woman to study medicine (1912), to become the member of the Legislature (1926), Alderwoman in the Madras Corporation (1937), and Deputy President of a Legislature in India (1928). She was connected with Women's Indian Association of Madras since 1917, with the Muslim Ladies Association, Sarada Home, Madras Seva Sadan and Society for the Indian Ladies Samaj. As a Legislator (1927-30, 1952-7) she successfully piloted measures for the promotion of girls' education and extension of maternity and child welfare. She secured poor girls from payment of school fees and was responsible for the establishment of a hostel for Muslim girls, introduced government scholarship for Harijan girls and championed Sarada Act of 1928. She initiated measures to penalize dedication of girls to temples in 1929, eradicate nautch parties and piloted the Act for Suppression of Brothels and Immoral Traffic in 1930. She became the President of All India Women's Conference in 1930 and an Indian delegate to the International Conference of Women (Paris, 1926 and Chicago, 1933). She served as the Editor of *Stri-Dharma* from 1931 to 1940, established a Cancer Institute in Adayar in 1954. In 1956, she was awarded Padma Bhushan by the Government of India in recognition to her services for women and children.



67. UP Tenancy Bill: Rafi Ahmad Kidwai's Statement

Tribune, 14 August 1939

Lucknow

12 August 1939

The Hon. Mr Rafi Ahmad Kidwai, Revenue Minister, UP Government has issued the following statement to the Press regarding the UP Tenancy Bill negotiations:

The air is thick with rumours regarding the negotiations on the Tenancy Bill. Various accounts have been given in the Press; but like the Curate's egg they have been given in parts. It is desirable that the facts of the case should be known as widely as possible in order that the public, and particularly the agriculturists, might know who were responsible for this inordinate delay in the passage of what has been universally recognised to be the most important measure of the present Government.

The Legislative Council was to meet in the last week of May to consider the UP Tenancy Bill. A few days before the date fixed some members of the Opposition and prominent spokesmen of zamindari interests saw me and suggested the postponement of the consideration of the Bill with a view to make an attempt in the interval to arrive at an agreement on its controversial provisions. With the experience that I have had of such negotiations, when the Bill was before the Legislative Assembly, I thought any further attempt would not yield any better result, and did not agree to the postponement. Owing to my illness I had to leave Lucknow a day or two before the appointed date. Some of the Council members again approached the Premier with the same request. It was agreed that the consideration of the Bill be postponed to 5 July.

The Opposition group appointed 8 members to negotiate with the Government. These 8 members met the Premier and other Ministers at Naini Tal in the third week of June and put before them their objections to the provisions of the UP Tenancy Bill. These were discussed, and although the Government did not express its final opinion on the various proposals, the Premier made it clear that he would not be prepared to amend the provisions about *Sir*.

On July 3 these 8 members again saw us at Lucknow. They were told again that the Government would not agree to any change in the provisions about *Sir*. They accepted this position and started negotiations on other points. By the time the Council met on July 5 an agreement had been reached on all the points excepting on the ejectment clause although several suggestions were made and a definite proposal was approached by the members of the Opposition as well as by the representatives of zamindars to agree to the motion for reference of the Bill to a Select Committee. Begum Aizaz Rasool and others assured me that they wanted this reference only for the purpose of embodying the agreement into the provisions of the Bill. They thought it would be easier to read just the Bill in the light of the agreed conclusions in the Select Committee. They also assured me that in that Committee they would not reopen discussion on any of the provisions they had agreed to include those relating to *sir* and that, if by the time the Committee met an agreement was not arrived at on the ejectment clause they would discuss that clause alone in the Committee. On this assurance I agreed to the reference of the Bill to Select Committee. Accordingly I made this position quite clear in the Council when I accepted the motion for reference to Select Committee. In the course of my speech I said:

'do tin hafton men zamindar sahiban ke nomaindon aur is awam ke kuch memberon se batchit hui. Ab mujhe yeh kahnemen khushi hai ke is bat chit ka natija yeh nikla ke is masuada kanoon ke ziada tar usool in logon ne kabool kar liye. Sirf ek he dafa aisi bat jispar kuchh ikhtilaf hai—Lakin Government ko yeh yakin dilaya gaya hai ke yeh bill select committee men es sabab se

bheja jaraha hai ke ye baten tai hui hain unhen draft karke is bill men shamil kardiya jai our jo ikhtilaf bedakhli ke bae men baqi hai woh tai hojai. Is yakeen ke sath ke us committee se yeh bill muttafiqa taur par tarmeem hokar aiga, mujh-ko is tajweez se koi ikhtilaf nahin hai.'

With this understanding I accepted the motion for reference to the Select Committee. The Committee was appointed with instructions to report on or before August 10. The Committee started its sittings on July 25 and the following days. It dispersed on July 29 to meet again on August 9 to sign the report. It is not open to me to say what transpired in the Committee. That the members of the Select Committee were satisfied with the result of the deliberation of the Committee will be borne out by the following quotation from a letter issued over the signatures of some of its members to all the Opposition members of the Council:

'As you are aware, a session of the Council begins from the 10th August on which date the Select Committee on the Tenancy Bill has to submit its report. We have been carrying on our work which is nearly over.

We have had the Select Committee meeting postponed until the 9th of August in order that we may have the benefit of what we have done before signing the Report'.

This letter was issued over the signature of Begum Aizaz Rasool, Raja Sri Ram, Rai Bahadur Babu Mohan Lal, Mr Janardhan Sarup, and Kanwar Rameshwar Pratap Singh.

The first warning that attempts were being made to sabotage the agreement came from a letter published in the *Pioneer* and other papers from 'a Taluqdar'. The interval between the dispersal of this committee and its reassembly on August 9 gave some of those, who were throughout opposed to a compromise on the Tenancy Bill, an opportunity to undo the work that had been patiently done by all towards an agreement.

As has been mentioned above, non-Congress members of the Council were invited to an informal Conference in the Conference House on August 9 for the 'formal acceptance' of the agreement. On the eve of this meeting certain selected members of the Council were invited to a meeting where a pledge was taken from them to oppose the agreement. If I am correctly informed, Begum Aizaz Rasool, Raja Sir Ram and Rai Bahadur Babu Mohan Lal, who were the spokesmen of the zamindar group in the course of the negotiations as well as in the Select Committee, were not invited to this meeting. The informal meeting of the non-Congress members of the Council on August 9 had hardly started when Raja Maheshwar Dayal Seth, Nawab Sir Mohamed Yusuf and a few others entered the Committee room and made strong speeches denouncing the agreement and insisting that "instructions" should be issued to the members of the Select Committee to demand extension of time. In this meeting as well as in the meeting held the previous evening, it was insisted that provisions relating to *sir* should also be amended. Rai Bahadur Babu Mohan Lal protested. He made it clear that on July 5 they had assured the Government that if, an agreement was reached on ejectment clause, they would support the Bill as modified by the agreement and now when the ejectment provision had been amended to suit their requirements, it was not open to them to go back on their word and press for any more amendments. Begum Aizaz Rasool placed the terms of the agreement and the alternative formulae for ejectment for the consideration of the members. But no regard was shown for their sentiments, commitments and opinions, although they had acted as their representatives with full authority in response to their unanimous wishes and it was suggested that the members of the Select Committee should demand an extension of time to report on the Bill.

I need not say anymore. Whenever negotiations were started and a compromise was in sight, interested persons made it a point to upset the agreement. This has been my experience since the Tenancy Bill was introduced in the Assembly. For days and days we met both formally in the Select Committee appointed by the Assembly and informally at the Premier's residence with no

result. Many of the amendments made in the Select Committee were the result of these negotiations. The provision about ejectment in the Bill as it emerged from the Assembly was itself a result of the suggestions made by the representatives of the Zamindars. When, we accepted it, we thought that there would be no more any objection to the ejectment clause. But these hopes did not last long. Again, it was on the suggestion of the zamindars that we introduced and retained the provisions for the realisation of rent by the sale or sub-lease of the holding. But even this did not satisfy certain sections.

However, we did not lose our patience and, as has been mentioned above when suggestions were made and the Bill was laid on the table of the Council, we agreed to enter into fresh negotiations and make every effort to reach an agreement. All attempts at a compromise, whether by negotiations or by arbitration, have been resisted by certain persons who have been posing to be protectors of the interests of the zamindars. They know they cannot get better terms and it is in the interests of the zamindars that the Bill is passed into law with the amendments agreed upon without any delay. But they think if the controversy on the Tenancy Bill is brought to an end, they would lose political advantage it gives them. In fact, I am told, it was admitted by some of the prime movers that they were concerned more with the matters political than with the merits of the Bill and they wanted to keep the controversy alive with a view to strengthen their position in the forthcoming elections to the Legislative Council early next year.

The choice rests with the Zamindars. Will they stand for peace, good-will and harmony in the countryside or will they all low themselves to be exploited by persons whose motives and objectives are different from their own?

68. Literacy Campaign in Bihar

Modern Review, Vol. XXVI, August 1939, pp. 150-51

August 1939

The Hon'ble Dr Syed Mahmud, Education Minister of Bihar, deserves great credit for the efforts made in his province for the liquidation of illiteracy. Critics have said, indeed, that the results have not been commensurate with the fuss made. But assuming without admitting, the truth of the criticism, it cannot be denied by the most hostile critic that remarkable results have been obtained during the year the scheme has been worked. We do not know whether the Bihar Government has provided an adequate number of libraries, like those provided by the UP Government, in order to enable adults who have newly acquired literacy to keep up the habit of reading; they may otherwise fall back into illiteracy. The financial resources of the Bihar Government are much smaller than those of the UP, but something can be and perhaps has been done in the direction pointed out.

We have no definite and reliable information as regards some aspects of the literacy achieved in the direction of making adibasi, Bengali and Oriya illiterate literate in their respective languages. It has been hinted and it was in fact alleged at a meeting at Purulia last month in our presence that the campaign has been taken advantage of to make persons whose mother tongue is not Hindi literate in Hindi instead of in their respective mother-tongue. Mr Jimut Bahan Sen,¹ a parliamentary Secretary of the Bihar ministry, who was present at the meeting, said that the Bihar ministry has no such intention and that, if anything undesirable had been done, it was the work of over-zealous underlings.

The Bengal weekly *Sanjibani*, edited for half-a-century by the late Babu Krishna Kumar Mitra,² gives in the course of an editorial note in its issue of the 13th July last the following statistics of illiterate Bengali-speaking persons in Manbhum whom, it is alleged, the Bihar Government has been trying to turn into Hindi-speaking persons by teaching them Hindi instead of Bengali:

Thana	Percentage
	100
Bagh	75
Gobindpur	75
Toondi	90
Karkend	90
Jharia	90
Dhanbad	50

We do not know our contemporary's source of information. We have reproduced its figures, not for raising a controversy, or for giving those in Bihar who may be representative-incarnations of the young man who told John Morley¹ that his forte was inventive an opportunity to display their talents, but it enabled the authorities to put a stop to undesirable activities, if any, or, if there be none, to contradict unfounded rumours.

Mahatma Gandhi has evened anxiety to put a stop to provincialism. These seemingly but not really insignificant matters are a permanent source of provincial embitterment and should receive serious attention.

Efforts to make Hindi the Lingua Franca of India imply that those whose mother-tongue is not Hindi should learn it in addition to their mother-tongues, it does not imply that their mother-tongues should be suppressed and only Hindi is to be learnt by them instead.

¹ Jimut Bahan Sen (1890-1961), educated at Bankura Zilla School, 1909, later went to Scotland for higher studies; assistant secretary, Bihar Provincial Congress Committee, 1930; member, Bihar and Orissa Legislative Council, 1923-29, member Legislative Assembly, 1937-39; Parliamentary Secretary to minister for public works and irrigation in 1937; elected member of West Bengal legislative Council in 1959.

² Krishna Kumar Mitra (1852-1937) was editor of *Sanjivani* and one of the early members of the Congress; arrested in 1908 for involvement in the swadeshi movement; left the Congress in 1921 after he disagreed with Gandhi's non-cooperation programme, staunch follower of Brahmo Samaj and a dedicated social reformer.

³ John Morley (1828-1923); Chief Secretary of Ireland (1886-92-95); Secretary of State for India (1905-10). He authored many books, including the biographies of Gladstone, Edmund Burke, Voltaire and Rousseau.

69. On Resignation of Congress Ministry in Assam:

H.J. Twynam¹ to Viceroy, 3 September 1939

Linlithgow Collection, Acc. No. 2174, NAI

[Extracts]

During the past fortnight the main preoccupation has, of course, been the international situation and the apprehension of war. The Premier and Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed,² his principle supporter in the Ministry, have been at Poona attending the Premier's Conference.³ I have discussed the matter with the K.K. Sen, the Legislative and LSG Minister, who is an Independent, and there can be no question that his sympathies are with the Democratic Powers and that he will support any measures which may be considered necessary. The same is true of other Ministers in so far as they can be said to act independently of the Premier who is mainly reasonable for their elevation to their present position. I have little doubt that if the Premier and Fakhruddin resigned office on the ground that they were not prepared to support a War policy, there would be little or no difficulty in forming a Ministry which would be prepared to support War measure. Yesterday, I discussed the matter with the Premier and informed him of the measures taken regarding Digboi.⁴ He raised no difficulties and appears to agree that it would be an advantage for the Central Government to

be responsible for the areas as a 'protected area'. As regards the general attitude likely to be adopted by Congress, the Premier would evidently welcome a decision that Congress Ministries should remain in office. The Premier's Conference qualified this by a resolution demanding that the Central Government should accept responsibility for all expenditure connected with the War. This is a very insipid way of dealing with the situation, but indicates, to my mind, that the stand taken by Britain is secretly approved of...

Actually... the Congress Party, in common with all parties, have no real doubts to the justice to Britain's cause and realise that, after their long association, the defeat of Britain would be intolerable to bargain and will expect some concession over finance both as a sop to provincial public opinion as a gesture of goodwill...

¹ Henry Joseph Twynam (b.1887); entered ICS in 1909; commissioner in Bengal from 1933-34; acting governor of Assam (1939) and the CP and Berar (1940).

² Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed (1905-77); educated in Government school in Gonda (UP) and Delhi; graduated from St. Catherine's College, Cambridge, and was called to the Bar at London's Inner Temple; joined Congress in 1931 and was returned to the Assam Legislative Assembly in 1935; minister of Finance and Revenue, 1938-39; held important portfolios in the State and central Governments; elected President of the Indian republic on 24 August 1974; died in office on 11 February 1977.

³ The conference was held at Poona on 24-25 August. Among the subjects discussed were the signing of the non-aggression pact between Germany and Russia (23 August), and the grim international situation arising out of the war.

⁴ Towards the end of 1937, a union was established at the Assam Oil Company in Digboi. In response to its demands, the Government appointed a Court of Enquiry towards the end of August 1938. Meanwhile the company began to discharge some of its workers,—approximately 63 lost their job between 14 November 1938 and 1 April 1939. There was violence as well, leading to casualties. The Congress President, Rajendra Prasad, was asked to intervene. But his efforts failed to resolve the dispute. For his report to the Congress, see *Indian Annual Register*, Vol. 2, pp. 205-8.

70. On Resignation of Congress Ministries:
Viceroy to H.J. Twynam, 9 September 1939
Linlithgow Collection, Acc. No. 2174, NAI

Simla
9 September 1939

Many thanks for your letter of 3rd September, Np. 63. I am delighted to see from it that the general attitude of your ministry should be so satisfactory in relation to the war situation and it is significant, too, that the position should be one in which, in your judgment, were *The premier and Fakhruddin to resign* as a protest against War policy, little or no difficulty need be anticipated in forming a Ministry which would be prepared to support the War measures. The attitude of the Premier as regards Digboi is also very satisfactory, and I gather the work of the War Purposes Committee referred to in Para 2 of your letter is proceeding smoothly.

Broadly speaking, I think we have every reason to be satisfied with the general reactions of the public of all parties to the War. So far as I am aware, there has been no difficulty or none of the least importance, in any province in connection with the Section 126(a) amendment, and the general impression I get from all Congress Provinces is that, subject to the decisions of the Working Committee at their forthcoming meeting, Ministers are ready and even anxious to remain in office and to give reasonable cooperation. I trust in these circumstances that the Working Committee will take the right line Gandhi, with whom I had an interview of 1¾ hours, made it very clear to me, of course, that he spoke for himself only and could not commit the Congress.¹ But he made his attitude clear beyond any question, and I could not help regarding the statement which he subsequently issued (and which he was courteous enough to show me in draft) as an excellent one

and well calculated to turn the minds of Congress followers in the right direction. I have also seen a large variety of other political figures, notably Jinnah, Aney² representing the Congress Nationalists, and representative of the Sikhs, the European and the Anglo-Indian. There was in my discussions with Jinnah, (who has also issued a statement which you will have seen) the rumbling the Muslim feelings of discontent with the extent of protection which has in certain provinces according to them been afforded by Governors.³ But the Muslim attitude as a whole is, I think, all that it should be, and Sikander Hyat Khan, representing the very important Punjab elements and equally Fazlul Haq, so far as the Bengal Muslims are concerned, have been reassuring as regards the attitude of their community in those provinces.

¹ Gandhiji met the Viceroy on 5 September and issued a statement the same day. For his statement, see *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. 70, pp. 161.

² He stated in his statement of 5 September: 'I knew I had no authority to speak for any person except myself. I had no instruction from the Working Committee in the matter... I told HE as much'.

³ Madhav Srnhari Aney (1880-1968); Vice-President Indian Home Rule League; President of the Berar Provincial Congress Committee (1921-30), and elected to Central Assembly (1937) by defeating the Congress candidate. Aney was closely associated with the Hindu Mahasabha, leading the campaign against the Communal Award.

71. On Resignation of Congress Ministries: Chairman of the All India Congress Parliamentary Sub-Committee to all Congress Prime Ministers, 17 September 1939

Valmiki Choudhary (ed), *Dr Rajendra Prasad: Correspondence and Select Documents*, Vol. 4, pp. 187-89

I am addressing you in regard to the war situation that has arisen and which affects India and your Government vitally. Many of the Congress Ministers have been asking as to what their attitude should be in dealing with this situation. It is obvious that difficult and delicate problems are arising and will arise from day to day, and it is highly desirable that a uniform policy, in consonance with Congress principles and policy, should be followed by all the Congress provincial Governments. Some of these problems were considered at the Prime Ministers' conference held in Poona last month and a general agreement was arrived at in regard to the policy to be pursued. Those decisions and directions have to be borne in mind and followed now.

The policy of the Congress Governments must necessarily be governed by the general Congress policy at this juncture. The Working Committee has issued an important and weighty statement on the present situation. Though this statement does not decide finally about our future course of action, it clarifies the position and indicates our objectives and the alternatives before us. In the course of the next few weeks it may be possible to take a further and more definite decision which may lead to consequences involving the resignation of Congress Ministries. But to say that such resignation is inevitable would be wrong. There are other possible developments. In any event Congress Ministries must realise that there is a possibility of conflict on wider national issues and this will vitally affect their future. They have therefore to keep themselves in readiness for any eventuality.

Meanwhile Congress Ministers are invited to study carefully the Working Committee's statement and to appreciate all its implications. In any conversations with the Governor or any communications with the Government of India the background of this statement has always to be

borne in mind and emphasized. They have to make it clear to their respective Governors that the Working Committee's statement is not to be treated lightly and those who do so will do so at their peril.

It is also desirable that early steps be taken to pass a resolution in the Provincial Assemblies giving full support to the position taken up by the Working Committee in their statement. Where Provincial Assemblies are not in session steps may be taken to call a special meeting at an early date for this purpose. Where this is not possible the Government may adopt the resolution as a Government. A draft of the resolution to be adopted is being sent to you herewith.

One essential fact has to be kept in mind, more especially during this intervening period before a final decision is taken by the Congress. The Provincial Ministries should not allow in practice any limitations of their powers or permit the Government of India or the Governor to encroach on their domain or functions directly in their Province. In the so-called secondary war activities such as control of prices, profiteering, production etc., the provincial Governments should take full part and keep them under their complete control. In the primary war activities, such as enrollment of recruits etc., they should hold their hands and not commit themselves till a final decision is taken.

Many difficult problems will of course arise and it is not easy to enumerate them. Ministers will have to exercise their discretion or refer them to us for advice. It is clear, however, that Ministers cannot agree to anything that goes against Congress principles or is likely to humiliate them.

72. On Resignation of the Congress Ministry:

Copy of a note by the Chief Secretary to
the Government of Orissa

Linlithgow Collection, Acc. No. 2216, NAI

18 September 1939

In a conversation this morning with Prime Minister, I raised the question of the resolution passed by the Working Committee and the attitude of the Ministry towards it. I also asked whether the Provincial Ministers, wherever a Congress Ministry is functioning, had been consulted in this matter before the resolution was drafted and accepted. The Praja Mandal told me that there had been exchange of views in this matter and that the resolution as passed by the Committee reflected the opinion of the majority of the Congressmen. The Orissa Ministry, like all other Congress Ministries, were bound to carry out the decisions of the Working Committee. He himself had no doubts that the resolution will be warmly supported by the Congress Ministries. Hare Krushna Mahtab,¹ who had been to this meeting of the Working Committee returned to Cuttack two days ago and has discussion with the Prime Minister. He seems to have told the Prime Minister that the view put forward by Gandhi and supported by Jawaharlal Nehru that in her own interests India should support Britain in this War was agreed to even by Subhas Bose. The resolution is, of course, hedged in by certain condition, but the Prime Minister was of the opinion that the Congress would definitely support Great Britain and France in this war. Mahtab appears to have told the premier that it was intended that as soon as a final decision was taken a resolution would be moved in the Provincial Assemblies by the Congress Ministries assuring the support of the Congress and the Ministries. The recent reports of German aerial bombing and the sinking of ships by the

submarines without notice would, in the opinion of the Prime Minister, considerably stiffen the attitude of the Congress against Germany.

¹ Hare Krishna Mahtab (b. 1899); joined the freedom struggle in 1921; Chief Minister of Orissa in 1936–50, and again in 1956–61; minister of industries and commerce in 1955–56 and Orissa's Chief Minister from 1956–1961.

73. Resignation of Congress Ministries:

Linlithgow to Secretary of State, 12 September 1939

Linlithgow Papers, Acc. No. 2156, NAI

[Extracts]

4. If Congress is going to show itself entirely intransigent, and if it becomes clear that they are prepared to continue to hold office in the provinces only at the price of promises or immediate concessions which you and I are not in a position to make, it may appear expedient to call an all-parties conference, at which the hollowness of the Congress claim to speak for India would very soon be exposed. Thereafter, we should be in the best tactical position—if they continue to be utterly unreasonable—to face that early resignation of the Congress Ministers and the onset of a Section 93¹ position in all 'Congress' provinces. If this position must come, there is much to be said for facing it early rather than at a later stage of the War when we may be engaged in an extensive campaign in the Middle East. You may rely upon me to do my best to keep Congress Ministries in office so long as this can be achieved without the sacrifice of the essential things....

This section of the Act of 1935 transferred administrative and legislative powers to the Governor. It was to remain in force for six months unless revoked earlier. Thereafter, the section could be extended by the Council and the Assembly for a maximum duration of three years.

74. The UP Ministry: Haig to Linlithgow, 8 October 1939

Haig Papers, Acc. No. 2068, NAI

[Extracts]

My dear Lord Linlithgow,

The Ministers have all returned to Lucknow, where a short meeting of the Assembly was held from the 3rd to 6th October, principally for the purpose of finishing off the Tenancy Bill. The Speaker seized the opportunity to deliver a highly controversial speech about India having been brought into the War without its consent, and about the recent amendment of the Government of India Act having taken away the powers of provincial Government

2. Pant has remained up here. The Civil Surgeon tells me that the doctors are still not agreed whether his symptoms indicate tuberculosis or not. The Bombay doctors thought so but the Lucknow doctors considered there was not sufficient evidence, and this was also the view of the Naini Tal doctors....

3. I am not yet able to anticipate who might take his place in that event. Kidwai has been functioning as unofficial Premier in a very practical way and I have been well satisfied with his attitude whenever I have discussed problems of difficulty with him. There is the very great advantage that he comes to a conclusion quickly and sticks to it. This is certainly in marked contrast to Pant. He has great deal of influence in the Party. On the other hand I think there might be a good deal of opposition to a Muslim Premier. Katju would not be a possible choice as he is not well enough

liked by the party. If any one other than Kidwai has to succeed Pant it would be some one who is not at present in the Ministry.

4. I think it is likely that before long in any case the Ministry will have to be reconstituted. I was talking to Kidwai on the subject only last week. He said that the Ministers were beginning to feel that they needed help and that two or three additional Ministers ought to be appointed. They also felt that if the Ministry were to be expanded it was important to bring in a representative of the depressed classes, which is certainly in my opinion desirable. I said that I had always felt that a Ministry of six was not sufficient for the work of this Province, and that I quite agreed that the numbers ought to be increased. But I said that I had hoped that when any question of increasing the number of Ministers arose the opportunity would be taken to effect a coalition with the Muslim League and perhaps bring in two of their representatives. I was rather interested to see how Kidwai as a Congress Muslim would take this suggestion. He took it in fact very well and said that they had often considered the possibility of bringing in Khaliquzzaman¹ and Muhammad Ismail Khan,² the two chief representatives of the Muslim League, and that they thought that they would fit quite well into the Ministry. He declared that the difficulty was not provincial conditions but the opposition of Jinnah who was not prepared to allow Muslim Leaguers to take office in Congress provinces unless it were done on an All-India basis. You may remember that when I saw Jawaharlal Nehru and made a similar suggestion to him, he gave me to understand that there would be no particular difficulty in this Province, but that it was a question that had to be handled from the point of view of India as a whole. Recent newspaper telegrams from Delhi suggest that perhaps we are now approaching the point at which this question of coalition between the Congress and the Muslim League in the provinces will be taken up in a practical way. I sincerely hope that it may be, for I am convinced that we shall have no prospect of communal peace until this is done....

5. The Khaksars have been giving a great deal of trouble during the last fortnight. Their activities in Lucknow have not been on a large scale, though they have more than once shown considerable violence in resisting arrest by the police. But the Lucknow situation is now not giving rise to anxiety. A band of two to three hundred Khaksars, however, about a fortnight ago marched into the Muzaffarnagar district. The authorities had no previous information and the local police that could be gathered at the moment were not in sufficient force to tackle them. Arrangements were made for coordinating body police forces in the Meerut Division and a sufficient body was collected supported by troops. The local authorities were very apprehensive that these Khaksars, who were in a turbulent mood and, appeared well organised on military line, could not be arrested without considerable casualties, and they were quite rightly anxious to avoid this. They therefore entered into conversations with the Khaksars, which in fact prolonged themselves unduly, and I think encouraged the Khaksars to feel that the authorities were reluctant to tackle them. However, after a good deal of delay this body of Khaksars which had in the mean time been reinforced and I think numbered about 350, were arrested a day or two ago without resistance. So all is well that ends well. In the meantime however other bands of Khaksars had been invading or attempting to invade the Meerut Division and it was high time that the Muzaffarnagar contingent was dealt with. A body which attempted to enter the UP from Delhi was stopped on the Hindan Bridge and has dispersed and returned to Delhi. Another body of 500 marched into the province in the direction of Bulandshahr. I have just heard that this split up into two parts; 200 of them seem to have been arrested without difficulty and I hope the remaining 300 will also be secured before long. In these operations we have had the greatest assistance from the military authorities. It is very fortunate that these arrests have been made without firing or casualties, for as the movement has developed there have been clear signs that Muslim opinion is tending to take up the cause of the Khaksars on communal lines. An adjournment motion was moved in the Assembly by a

Muslim Leaguer and there were threats that the Muslim League might support the cause of the Khaksars before long. This is simply political opportunism, the utilization of a convenient weapon for attacking the Ministry. I have also heard from Craik, with whom I have been keeping in touch, that the Punjab Muslim press have been expressing sympathy with the Khaksars, though the Government have been doing their best to discourage this, and Sir Sikander Hyat Khan has strongly advised the Khaksars to abandon this movement against the UP. Conversations of some kind are still proceeding at Lucknow, and it is not unlikely that there may be a settlement within the next few days. In the meantime I heard today from the Chief Secretary over the telephone that the Ministers were rather perturbed owing to a telegram from Delhi appearing in the *Pioneer* which suggested that the Government of India looked certainly without disfavour on the Khaksars and were proposing that their military spirit should be utilised by enlisting them as a contingent in the Territorial Force. I told the Chief Secretary to assure the Ministers that I was confident that the Government of India would do nothing whatever to encourage the Khaksars.

6. In addition to the Khaksar trouble in the Meerut division, there has been a serious outbreak of rioting in Meerut city itself. This does not seem to have had any direct link with the Khaksars, the riot breaking out in the course of a Hindu Mahasabha procession organised in connection with a bye-election that is proceeding. Still the Khaksar proceedings have undoubtedly increased communal tension, and the Muslims were clearly the aggressors in this riot. The position seems to be well in hand now, but it has been a considerable additional embarrassment and has emphasized the necessity of mopping up the Khaksars promptly.

7. The threatened strike at Cawnpore broke out last Monday. I had some long conversations about the position with Sir J.P. Srinivastava, some of the Employers' Association and my own Ministers shortly before I left Lucknow. The position briefly was that as a result of an unjustified strike by the men of the New Victoria Mills some months ago the mills were closed. Recently the management proposed to reopen. They have, ever since the increase of wages granted as a result of the strike in 1938, maintained that they were unable to run the mills on the new rate of wages which, they say, is higher than is paid in any other mills in Cawnpore. They therefore reduced the wages to what they contend is the general level now paid in Cawnpore, and opened the mills on those terms. They soon secured the necessary labour, partly from their old workers and partly from new men. The Mazdur Sabha said that they could not agree to mill owners in this way practically fixing their own rate of wages without any inquiry, and also complained that the old workers were not being given a proper opportunity of re-employment. On the latter point it seems that the mills were giving preference to the old workers what they applied for re-employment, but that as many of them were holding back owing to the reduced terms they were now recruiting a large number of new men who were content to take the wages offered. When I saw Sir J.P. Srivastava I found that the Employers' Association were inclined to take a very stiff attitude on the legal rights of the mills and they declined to agree to any arbitration, urging that the employees of the mills were perfectly satisfied and that the other party to the arbitration was only the Mazdur sabha, which they contended was not in any way representative of the general body of workers in Cawnpore. They were under the impression moreover that if the Mazdur Sabha declared a strike the workers would not follow them, and they were anxious to deal the Mazdur Sabha what they hoped would be a fatal blow. I put it to Srivastava that it was not sufficient that their case for lowering wages should be a good one (if it was so in fact) but it was also necessary that the public generally should believe that it was a good one, and that I thought it would be a great pity if they spoiled a good case by refusing to submit it to impartial judgment. Finally I was left with the impression that the employers probably would agree to arbitration on the point whether the new wages at the Victoria Mills were on a level with the average wages paid in the

Cawnpore mills and also about the opportunities given for re-employment of the old workers of the mills, but that they objected to the arbitration being entrusted to the Labour Commissioner who was an officer under the Government. They claimed that it should be done by a High Court judge. I then discussed the matter with Katju and Kidwai and suggested that the best solution would be that there should be arbitration on these points by a High Court Judge. Katju objected to the High Court judge and was inclined to stick our for the Labour Commissioner; but I said I could see no justification for preferring the Labour Commissioner to a High Court Judge. When I left Lucknow the matter was still hanging in the balance; but a day or two afterwards the Employers' Association agreed to submit to arbitration by a High Court Judge and the Ministry were quite prepared to accept this. At this stage the Mazdur Sabha ran out, having previously agreed to accept arbitration, and said that they could not agree unless in the meantime all the old workers of the Victoria Mills were reinstated. They were, I understand, very unwilling that the case should be put before a High Court Judge. They called a general strike, and contrary to the expectations of the Employers' Association, which are generally wrong on this point, the workers in most of the mills came out. It was rather amusing however to find that the workers in the New Victoria Mills, regarding whose conditions the strike was being called, have remained at work. The Ministers were upset at the strike being declared. They had used all the influence they had against it, and when the employers had been got to agree to a reasonable settlement they were very displeased with the Mazdur Sabha for rejecting it. Katju has been over in Cawnpore, and I have heard today by telephone that it is hoped that the strike may be called off within a few days, on the understanding that the New Victoria Mills will find places for about 1000 of their old workers who had not been re-engaged (a thing which Srivastava had told me in Lucknow he thought he could manage without much difficulty), leaving out 250 whom the management had always said they would on no account re-employ, and with the understanding that when the strike was called off the points in dispute as explained above would be submitted to the arbitration of a High Court Judge. I hope therefore that the wheels of industry may be restarted in Cawnpore before long. The Chief Secretary reports to me on the telephone that Katju is now fully persuaded that the Government must take a much firmer line with the Mazdur Sabha than they have in the past, and that he is prepared really to set to work to get some proper organisation of labour in Cawnpore, a course of action which I had vainly pressed on the Ministers nearly two years ago. The Ministers are I think determined that so far as may be within their power there must be an end to these constant interruptions of work in Cawnpore, and that production for war purposes must not be impeded. If this spirit continues, I think we may at last see some possibility of peace in Cawnpore industry. There will still of course remain the sinister influence of Balkrishna Sharma, who is both the head of the local Congress Committee and a supporter of the Mazdur Sabha even when its activities are directly contrary to Congress policy. But if the Ministers are in earnest difficulties of this sort can be overcome...

PS I have just heard in connection with the Bulanshahr Khaksars¹ that it was necessary to fire and that 5 khaksars were killed. I have had no details.

¹ Choudhry Khaliquzzaman (1889–1973); educated at MAO College, Aligarh, 1907–16; joined Congress in 1916 acting as a member of the reception committee; took a leading part in the Home Rule movement, 1917–18; elected President of the Lucknow Congress Committee in March 1920; gave up practice during the non-cooperation movement; joined the swarajists, 5 January 1923; Chairman, Lucknow Municipal Board, 1923; a leading Muslim politician in the 1930s and 1940s; after independence, governor of East Pakistan.

² Nawab Mohammad Ismail Khan (1884–1958) belonged to a landowning family of Meerut and was the grandson of Nawab Mustafa Khan 'Shefta', a poet-friend of Mirza Ghalib; educated at St. John's College, Cambridge, and was called to the Bar; associated with the Muslim League but was also close to the Nehru household; his inclusion in the Congress ministry in 1937 was a source of Congress-League discord; after independence, member of the Indian Parliament

(1950–52); on 25 July 1939, Harry Haig made the following observation: 'The other side of the picture is illustrated by an interesting talk I had recently with Muhammad Ismail Khan, one of the chief leaders of the Muslim League in the Legislative Assembly. He is a man with long record of political activities, essentially moderate—indeed, but very definitely a Nationalist in the old days. He was always looked upon with considerable suspicion but he... put Nationalism above Communalism. I found that though he used moderate language, he seemed now quite to accept the position adopted by the more extreme Muslim Leaguers, that there really was little prospect of any accommodation between Hindus and Muslims, that their culture and ideas were fundamentally different, and that it was difficult for them to unite into a nation so long as the barrier created by the exclusive Hindu social customs remained. He also explained the distrust of Muslims for the Federal centre, which must be under the control of the Hindus, will be able to interfere too much with the Muslim provinces. Therefore they wish to reduce the power of the centre as far as possible. They are also afraid of their influence to diminish the proportion and importance of Muslims in the Army. I have no doubt this represents Punjab views with which Your Excellency is well acquainted; but coming from this particular source I thought it might be interesting to pass on this conversation.'

'The khaksar movement aimed at purifying Islam. It started in the 1920s as a non-political movement meant for social service. This developed rapidly in north India under Inayatullah Khan (1883–1936) popularly known as Allama Mashriqi. The Khaksars movement urged the Congress and the Muslim League to resolve their differences and fight for the full independence of India; it was declared an unlawful associateship by the Provincial Government in June 1941.

75. The Bombay Tenancy Bill

(a) Protected Tenants' Rights, *Bombay Chronicle*, 27 September 1939

The principle laid down in the Tenancy Bill that rights given to the 'protected tenants' carried with them certain liabilities was assailed by some of the Opposition members who advocated the theory that rents which could not be paid should be wiped off; when discussion was resumed in the Bombay Legislative Assembly on Tuesday.

The Hon Mr G.V. Mavlankar, Speaker of the Assembly, was in the chair.

The Hon Mr Morarji R. Desai, Revenue Minister, stated in reply to the criticisms that he could not create an order of Society, as visualised by certain opposition members, in which they advocated that rents due to the landlords should not be paid to the tenants. He would be of course happy if such an order of society came; but the idea seemed to him to be chimerical and mad.

Proceedings in Detail

After question-time, discussion on Clause 5, regarding rights and liabilities of protected tenant in the Tenancy Bill was resumed.

The Sub-Clause regarding liabilities in respect of non-payment of rent became the spearhead of attack by the Independent Labour Party Group.

The relevant Sub-Clause stated that the tenancy shall be terminated provided the tenant fails to pay in any year within 15 days from the day fixed for the payment of the last instalment of land revenue in accordance with the rules made under the Bombay Land Revenue Code, 1879.

Mr B.R. Bhole moved an amendment for the deletion of the Sub-Clause. He stated that, if it was not done so, 'protected tenants' would no longer be protected within a few years.

Mr S.V. Parulekar supporting the amendment stated that the sub-clause on the one hand strengthened the hands of the landlords and on the other, drove the tenants into incurring debts, because the Bill could create the mischief of tempting the tenants to borrow money in order to get legal protection. He referred to the report of the Deccan Ryots Commission, which expressed the view that a good crop was obtained only once in three years.

Replying Mr Morarji Desai stated that under the present order of society a tenant was expected to pay rents for the land belonging to others. And so long as property was not destroyed, it stood to reason that any limitless rents could not be recovered and that was why provision had been made in the Bill for payment of reasonable rents.

'Chimerical and Mad'

But here were members in the House who were openly advocating that rents should not be paid. They seemed to him to stand for a different order of society, construction of which seemed difficult for him to have at present. But if it could be constructed by someone else, he would be happy about it.

But at present such an idea seemed to him to be chimerical and mad.

The Minister could not understand how he was helping the landlord by such a clause. The landlord was legitimately entitled to get his reasonable rents. The Minister would be, in fact, failing in his duty if he did not see to it that reasonable rents were paid by the tenants. Therefore, he opposed the amendment.

The amendment was pressed to a division and lost, 10 voting for and 68 against. The Democratic Swaraj Party and Muslim League Party and the landlords voted with the Government.

Then Mr S.H. Jhabvala moved two amendments seeking the limitation period for the payment of the last instalment of rent from 15 days to two months and dues in dispute to be paid, as decided by a Mamlatdar or the First Class Sub-Judge, within four months instead of two, as laid down in the Bill, from the date of their decision.

The amendments were lost.

A further liability laid on the shoulder of the protected tenant was that he had not done any thing which was destructive or permanently injurious to the land. A number of amendments was moved this clause.

Mr M.M.A. Bhaji moved that the original clause that the tenant should use the land in a manner which rendered it unfit for the purpose for which it was held.

Replying the Minister stated that the words used were vague and might lead to much litigation. The amendment was rejected.

Messrs Jhabvala, Parulekar and R.R. Bhole moved three amendments. While Mr Parulekar and Mr Bhole sought to lay down that destruction and permanent injury to the land should be malicious, deliberate and grossly negligent, Mr Jhabvala wanted that the tenant should be proved to have consciously done such an act.

The Minister in the course of his reply stated that the words 'permanently injurious' indicated that the act was done consciously and not by nature. It was clear that, if the tenant had done anything of the kind described in the clause, he would be held responsible for it. Further acceptance of any of the amendments would result in creating uncertainties.

The amendments when put to vote were lost.

Mr H.V. Pataskar (Congress) moved an amendment for providing in the clause a new condition, namely, the use of land by a tenant for a purpose other than agriculture. The amendment was accepted by the Revenue Minister and the House passed it.

In Event of Tenant's Illness

Further consideration of the clause was deferred, pending proper drafting of an amendment, whose intention was clear and acceptable to Government and which was to be moved by Mr Parulekar. The amendment sought a provision in the Bill for subletting in the event of the tenant's illness. The Revenue Minister stated that he was not opposed to such an intention.

The House then proceeded with Clause 6 of the Bill, which sought to fix responsibility for the maintenance and good repair of the boundary marks of the land held by a protected tenant and such other incidental expenses.

The Clause was passed. Mr G.K. Phadke then moved two new clauses fixing the rent payable to the landlord as the first charge on the crops and seeking to fix on him liability for payment of the land revenue for a particular land held by him.

Both the clauses were opposed to by Mr Parulekar and discussion over the clauses was not concluded, when the House rose for the day.

(b) Landmark in Bombay's Agrarian History,
Bombay Chronicle, 4 October 1939

The third reading of tenancy bill was passed by the Bombay Legislative Assembly, on Tuesday.

The bill was piloted by Mr Morarji Desai, Revenue Minister who, in reply to criticisms, hoped that the tenants in the Province would be made self-respecting and the Bill would create conditions whereby stability would be maintained and agriculture would benefit.

Over 20 Lacs of tenants would be affected by the piece of legislation.

The representative of the landlords fought to the last ditch. The Minister, however, appealed for mutual goodwill and understanding.

Proceedings in Detail

When the third reading of the Tenancy Bill was taken up, Sardar Vinchoorkar opposed it stating that Government by that legislation had hedged in by restrictions the aspect of self-cultivation which they [had] acknowledged in the Bill, to such an extent that the landlord's right to take back the land seemed to be only nominal. It looked as if the provision was there to meet the charge that the landlord's ownership in theory was not denied.

In considering the provisions of the Bill, he added, one found that Government had erred on the side of the tenants' interests to the point of over-anxiety. They had left no room for natural conduct or elasticity. Everything was reduced to terms of legal contract.

As discussion on the Bill progressed, the Bill became worse and it seemed to him that the original motives namely fixity of tenure and prevention of rack-renting, with which the legislation was sought to be introduced, were subsequently lost sight of. He further thought that the Bill would bring in more complications and defeat the very object for which it was meant. He hoped that Government had not lost sight of the fact that temptation and political necessities might urge Government to resort to measures that would not necessarily be in the interests of stability and safeguarding of due rights of other interests.

He thought that the landlords in his constituency at least were aware of the changing times and he assured the House, amidst cheers from Congress benches that they were trying to adjust themselves to those times.

Mr S.V. Parulekar, while supporting the Bill, felt that he was not enthusiastic in doing so. It was, however, true that the Bill conferred certain rights and privileges to the tenants but he thought that more rights and concessions should have been given them.

Mr P.J. Rohan (LLP) felt inclined neither to support the third reading of the Bill nor to oppose it. However, he agreed with Mr Parulekar that it did not go far enough.

Mr S.H. Jhabvala supporting the third reading pointed out that the chair should have noticed by that time that he was one of the most discontented and disgruntled members in the House. The Bill as it reached the stage of the third reading stood as a landmark in the agrarian history of the Province. As it travelled to the third reading, it seemed to him that no member had any reasonable excuse for expressing any 'natural opposition'.

He pointed out that Government had accepted twenty amendments either from the opposition members and from those belonging to the Congress Party. Therefore no one could grumble about it and the third reading deserved the support at the hands of every reasonable member in the House.

The Bill when published had not caused any great stir among the tenantry of the Province like the similar piece of legislation in the VP and CP. That was not because the tenantry of the Province was not sufficiently advanced as some thought, but because the tenants felt they could not express any natural opposition.

Opposition to Third Reading

Sir Chinoobhal Madhavlal opposed the third reading of the Bill and thought that the noose around the necks of the landlords was made tighter and tighter.

Mr L.H. Siddique (Muslim League) opposed the third reading because it contained the principle of expropriation.

Mr A.D. Dodmeti (Congress) speaking in 'Kanarese' supported the third reading of the Bill. He stated that the Tenancy Legislation would be heartily supported by the tenants of Kanara. If there were no such legislation then there would have been much ill feeling and bitterness between landlords and tenants.

Rao Saheb B. Thorat opposed the third reading.

'A Compromise'

Mr Jamnadas Mehta (DSP) supporting the Third Reading thought that the Bill was a compromise which did not go far enough to the root of things. When the Bill was first published, it created a sort of panic and the landlords took fright and moved from one corner to another to start agitation. After the Bill emerged from the Select Committee their agitation became less pronounced, as they found that all of them were in the same boat.

With regard to the argument that the Bill was expropriatory in nature, he pointed out that whatever it might be, it was not expropriatory. If it were so, then all taxation and adjustments were expropriatory. But the word was a slogan and was meant to create a stir and a panic.

The self respect of the masses would of course, be raised. But the working of the machinery was bristling with difficulties, not because of the Government's own creation, but due to inexperience of all of them in an ameliorative measures of that kind.

The problem of repaying the rents was tremendous and according to his calculation it was a terrific burden extending to not less than seven crores of rupees.

He pointed out that the landlord should not find in the Bill anything extraordinary fearing any revolution and the tenant also should not think that there was anything remarkable in it. In that subdued and harmless nature of the Bill, he gave his blessings to it and wished it God-speed.

Mr Atmaram Patil (Congress), supported the third reading of the Bill.

Mr M.M.A. Bhajji opposing the third reading said that the Bill was so drafted because of a lack of proper knowledge by the Revenue Minister of the rural conditions. 'This Government is not open to reason', he stated.

Mr D.K. Kunte (Congress) supporting the third reading asked the House whether there was anything in the measure which suggested to brush aside the traditions, so far existing in the relationship between the landlords and the tenants.

Mr R.A. Khedgikar supporting the third reading remarked that the Bill accepted the principle of protecting the exploiters from the exploited.

Minister's Reply

Replying to the criticisms, Mr Morarji Desai remarked that he had been accused by an Opposition member of lack of knowledge of proper rural conditions. In making such criticisms, it was necessary to be careful and that too while one was still young and wanted to learn. It was more so, with regard to politics and society.

He did not claim perfection but he could certainly claim some knowledge in such matters, because he was so situated in life that he passed major portion of it in rural surroundings, having contacts with villagers.

With regard to the argument advanced by Mr Siddique that the Bill would introduce Russian conditions in the Province, he asked whether the members had understood the implications of what he had said. In fact, the Bill was an honest attempt to prevent Russian conditions which he thought were inevitable if the landlords, took the attitude they had taken in the course of the discussion. By that Bill, he pointed out, that the landlords had lost nothing except the instrument of oppression which was responsible for the destruction of the self-respect of the tenants as a class—an instrument which to a large extent was responsible for the present conditions.

It was also argued, on behalf of the smaller landlords that they would find it difficult to get back their lands, if the tenants effected costly improvements on their lands.

Those fears were unjustified.

All persons could not be sound agriculturists. He asserted that agriculture could be made paying and would certainly pay, if it was taken to in the proper spirit, although he admitted that there were areas where agriculture was not paying, due to adverse natural conditions.

The Minister had no doubt in his mind that the Bill would remove that false security in which the landlords had been slumbering for all the time. They could not, any longer, live on a past glory or on past prosperity or on the patronization of former Government. By the legislation, he thought, the self-respect of the tenants would be restored.

Holding Scales Even

Even from the utility point of view, the suggestion made by Mr Parulekar, seemed to serve no purpose. The Minister thought that no man should exist on the labours of others and at the expense of somebody else. The Bill was an attempt to put the tenants on his legs, make him prosperous and fight for himself.

That was why Government wanted to hold the scales even, which were heavily tilted on one side at present. That did not mean that 'status quo' should be retained.

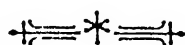
It was much better to go step by step, so that chaos would not be the result.

The Minister admitted that it was not a revolutionary measure and it did not seek to work wonders either in the case of landlords, or in that of the tenants.

It was, on the other hand, an evolutionary measure and sought to create conditions whereby stability would be maintained and agriculture would benefit.

Litigation in the initial stages could not be helped; but it could be removed, if the landlords and the tenants helped to create new conditions by mutual goodwill.

He thanked the House for the goodwill and co-operation it had shown and requested it to pass the Bill unanimously and asked all the members to work it in a spirit of service to the Province.



76. Resignation of Congress Ministry in NWFP:
North-West Frontier Province Governor's Report
Linlithgow Collection, Acc. No. 2210, NAI

9 October 1939

Dr Khan Sahib appears to be unconcerned by the negotiations now proceeding at Delhi. In such matters he relies implicitly on the judgment of his brother. Abdul Ghaffar Khan, who as a member of the Working Committee, is in the best position to advocate the case of the North West Frontier Province.

On the main question whether Dr Khan Sahib would resign if the Working Committee were to decide on definite non-cooperation, I think there is no doubt that he would. He still, however, entertains some vague idea that his ministry would be excluded from the purview of such an order. Dr Khan Sahib replied 'we are ready for all adventures and will resign if ordered to'.

77. In Case of the Congress Ministries' Resignation:
Linlithgow to Haig, 11 October 1939
Haig Papers, Acc. No. 2260, NAI

*The Viceroy's House
New Delhi*

My dear Haig,

I have had much in my mind lately, as you may imagine, the possibility of a Section 93 situation developing in the Congress Provinces or at any rate in those of them where there is no chance of an alternative Ministry being forthcoming. The worst that could happen would be that the Congress should suddenly decide to call out the Ministries simultaneously. I do not at present expect that; it seems more probable that the situation will develop comparatively slowly. However we must be prepared for the worst and should concert our plans as early as possible. The quickest and most satisfactory way of doing this is by conference. I considered whether I should ask Governors to come and meet me here, but dismissed the idea as a move likely to arouse too much comment. Failing Governors, the most suitable persons to confer with seemed at first sight to be those who would be the Governors' advisers. But these would be officers who are at present serving under Provincial Governments, which might raise objections of various kinds which would give the Conference a publicity which I am far from desiring for it. The only satisfactory solution seems to be that I should ask you to spare your Secretary to come to Delhi to concert measures with my advisers and the Secretaries of the governors of the Congress Provinces. There is of course some risk that even a Conference of Governors' Secretaries will excite comment which will not be helpful. On the other hand there can be no constitutional objection and the risk is less serious than the risk of leaving things until too late and being caught unprepared. I hope you agree and can let me know by telegram that you will spare your Secretary for a few days. I should imagine that the actual Conference would take not more than two days at the most. It is unlikely that I shall be able to give long notice of the Conference and the summons probably will have to issue from here by telegram.

2. The break with Congress, if it comes, may come in two ways: quickly with considerable bitterness or gradually with no wish on either side to make a bad business worse. I hope at present that the second is the more likely line of development. If the break were sudden and angry, we

should be engaged all along the line at once; the nationalist press would go to all lengths to support the policy of Congress and its columns would be closed to our side of the case; there would be in the towns the inevitable 'days' with processions, meetings, incendiary speeches and clashes with the police, in the countryside every effort would be made to stir up trouble and exploit grievances; we must expect strikes and even sabotage in industrial areas. In such circumstances we should have to strike hard and quietly and the first point on which I should like your views is whether the weapons which the ordinary law, supplemented by the Defence of India Act and the rules made under it, are sufficient. We have, as you know, a Revolutionary Movements Bill in draft which in case of need could be enacted by Governors as a Governor's Act and supplemented by a Revolutionary Movements Ordinance promulgated by the Governor-General. But to have recourse to these measures would, I feel, make the breach almost irreparable and I should be reluctant to go so far until circumstances compelled me. But I should like you to consider whether there are additional powers which you think you would require; it might be feasible to give them by means of further rules under the Defence of India Act. One particular power which I have in mind is the power to compel papers to publish news and, communiqués in the manner in which we would like them published.

3. In a situation such as I have envisaged you will realise the importance of getting and keeping the initiative. If however the break came gradually and with reluctance, we could afford with less danger to wait upon events. It might for instance be possible to come to an agreement locally with editors by which, while we would take no exception to sober criticism, they would keep their columns open to our side of the case and abstain from overt encouragement of branches of the Defence of India rules. The rules would only be enforced against the public to the extent to which the public by their conduct invited enforcement. Admittedly this would be a difficult situation to maintain for long, but it would be worth trying, if only to prevent a too sudden rise of temperature.

4. But whatever the position, I attach the greatest importance to a quick and effective presentment of our case to the public and to the dissemination of correct news. Various means, assuming that the Congress press was for practical purposes closed to us, could be used—

- (1) the friendly press, which would have to be treated with the greatest consideration;
- (2) the purchase, directly or indirectly, of space and support in ostensibly hostile or neutral papers;
- (3) financing new papers;
- (4) propaganda vans;
- (5) itinerant pro-Government propagandists;
- (6) All-India Radio, including the provision of free receiving sets in villages;
- (7) broadsheets and leaflets.

I should be glad to have your view on this difficult and supremely important problem.

5. I should be glad to know how you stand in respect of staff. I suppose that a good many of your officers have recently been recalled to India. I cannot hold out much hope that Departments of the Central Government will be able to release your officers who are serving under them. At the same time it occurs to me that Provinces which are not likely to be involved in serious trouble may have officers to spare; some adjustment might be possible either in the direction of replacing your officers employed under the Government of India by other or by the loan to you to direct of surplus officers from other Provinces.

6. If it should come to a fight, and I hope it may not, you will, I know, agree with me that while we cannot contemplate shutting our eyes to a state of things which will not only seriously impede the conduct of the war but also shake the foundations of law and order, the fight must on our side

be without bitterness, without malice and without trickery. Even if Congress Ministries go out, we need not despair of getting them back again during the war and in any event we must look forward to their eventual return to the power. In this connection I ought to mention to you that doubts have been expressed about how far we can expect our Government servants, and especially our Indian Government servants, to go in the way of exposing themselves to the resentments of those who have been in the past and will again be in the future their masters. I should be glad to hear if you have any misgivings yourself on this point. Its importance to our general policy is obvious.

7. I have noted down these points which occur to me as proper for discussion at the Conference which I propose to call and I should be glad of your views on them as early as may be. There are doubtless other points of general or particular application over which you yourself have been thinking. I should be glad to hear of them. You will no doubt see that when your Secretary comes to Delhi he is in a position to speak for you on all points which you or I may have raised. The detail of arrangements for the Conference can, I think you will agree, most suitably be handled by my Secretary (Public) in direct correspondence with Governors' Secretaries. An agenda will be drawn up and sent to your Secretary in due course, if time permits.

8. I ask you to read this letter not as an indication that I despair of avoiding a break with Congress, but as a precautionary measure which I should be foolhardy not to take.

78. Fazlul Huq on Congress Ministry:

A.K. Fazlul Huq to Linlithgow, 13 October 1939

Linlithgow Papers, Acc. No. 2036, NAI

I am taking the liberty of writing this letter in order to put on record my views on the various points which I had the privilege of discussing with your Excellency during the interview...

I will not waste my time trying to emphasise the fact that the Congress does not in any way represent the people of India as a whole—its pretensions on that point are hollow and unfounded—nor do I wish to waste time by trying to labour the point that the Congress has hardly got any power either for good or for mischief. They cannot help England in this war, because the Congress has no control over the people who ordinarily enlist in the Army. The fighting races are absolutely beyond the control of the Congress and the Congress threat that in case nothing is done, whole-hearted support will not be given to England by India is absolutely unjustified and baseless. The only point is, what is it that your Excellency should implement in the declaration which is going to be made on behalf of his Majesty's Government.

I think that I forgot to mention to your Excellency that the Muslims are very bitter in their complaints against the Congress Governments.¹ Various and very serious charges have been brought against these Congress Ministers, but there seems to be an impression in some quarters that these charges have not been proved. If your Excellency thinks that they are well founded, no proof is necessary and your Excellency can act on the assumption that there are grounds for these charges. If, on the contrary, these charges have not been proved, or at any rate no sufficient proofs have been forthcoming, there is still one very important point to consider which I wish to stress in this connection. It is this; whatever the causes may be, there cannot be the slightest doubt that Muslim feelings during the last 2½ years have been bitter against the Congress Ministries and that the Muslim press have with one voice condemned the Congress Ministers as harsh, tyrannical, communal and determined to crush the Muslims politically, socially, economically and otherwise. It is the exhibition of wounded feelings of a great community throughout these 2½ years and in every single Province which has been under the domination of the Congress. In this connection I

wish to draw Your Excellency's attention to the statement issued by Sir Jawala Prasad Srivastava; ex-Minister, the United Provinces, in the course of an interview to the *Pioneer* about the Congress and the League attitude to the War. To quote Sir Jawala Prasad: 'Without in any way approving or disapproving the attitude taken up by the Muslim League, can it be denied that the feeling is wide spread and general among the Muslims that their interests are not safe in the hands of the Congress and unless these are effectively safeguarded no further constitutional advance should take place'. He adds: 'In all seriousness can there be any real self-government in India so long as there is so much of distrust and given open hostility between the two important communities'. It cannot be denied that in their anxiety to pursue its so-called 'Mass Contact' programme the Congress had failed miserably to solve Hindu-Muslim problem.

The position, therefore, is that in any decision His Majesty's government may take regarding India's further constitutional advance, the Muslims and other minorities must be made to feel that their interests are really safe and secure and are not exposed to the mercy of a political faction which has miserably failed to discharge its duties towards the minorities of India.

There is one other point which I wish to emphasise. I believe it is the duty of the British Government in the face of the charges and the very serious charges that have been brought by the Muslims against the Congress to have a Royal Commission of Enquiry into the working of the Reforms since the introduction of Provincial Autonomy. We, in Bengal and the Punjab would be quite willing to lay our cards on the table and to come under the scrutiny of such a Royal Commission. If your Excellency thinks that the charges have not been substantiated, it is because the Muslims have not had any opportunity of producing any evidence before any tribunal. The newspapers would not publish accounts of Muslim grievances. It is only the Muslims press which have been ventilating these grievances, but unfortunately the Muslim press does not command a good audience in India and is not, therefore strong and impressive. I hope your Excellency will take all the facts into consideration when your Excellency makes a declaration regarding the post-war aims of Great Britain towards India.

¹ There was much correspondence between Huq and Nehru on the subject between 30 October 1939 and 16 December 1939. The letters of Nehru are included in volume 10 of his *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, for example, Nehru to Fazlul Huq, 30 October, 13 November, 18 November, 16, 18, 26 December 1939, *SWJN*, Vol. 10, pp. 461-72. For a strong editorial comment on Fazlul Huq's charges, see *Hindu*, 26 December 1939.

79. The Congress Ministry: In Bombay

Roger Lumley to Linlithgow, 17 October 1939

Linlithgow Collection, Acc. No. 2339, NAI

This report covers the first half of October.

General Situation

There is very little to say about this period, except that Ministers, the Legislature, and in fact everyone has remained in a state of tension pending the result of the conversations which you have had with Congress and other leaders. Latterly this 'war of nerves' has had its effect on some of my Ministers and particularly on Munshi.¹ He has found some excuse for seeing me almost everyday in order to try and gauge how the wind is blowing, but, as I have not been in a position to tell him anything, I have not been able to provide him with much comfort. He has left me in no doubt of his great anxiety that some agreement will be found which will enable Congress to remain in office. He himself would be prepared to accept anything, but it was become much

clearer to me in the last few weeks that there is a considerable difference of outlook between Ministers and the Working Committee. Ministers themselves have commented on this to me, and if the issue were in their hands, it would, I think be easy. I have, however, been appalled by the complete lack of statesmanship amongst the members of the Working Committee. For instance, in the matter of the first resolution, it is astonishing that it should not have occurred to them that a resolution, in those terms would have put an end to all chances of successful negotiations. It seems to me that the Working Committee have their eyes fixed only on the preservation of the Congress organisation as a good fighting machine, and although Ministers appear to be stating their point of view with rather more insistence and courage than formerly, it does not seem as if they have much influence, with the exception, no doubt, of Rajagopalachariar.

One point upon which Munshi has been harping in his recent talks with me is of some interest. He believes that if things go wrong and most of the Congress leaders spend of next two years in jail, at the end of that time the conservative elements, like himself, will be of no account at all and Congress will emerge from the fight with us as a Left-Wing party dominated by the communists. I have noticed that amongst the middle classes this fear of communism appears to be a real one...

¹ Kanaiyalal Maneklal Munshi (1887–1971), author, journalist, politician, was born in Broach and educated in Baroda, where he came under the spell of Aurobindo Ghose, and at the university of Bombay. He entered politics through the Home Rule League, of which he was secretary, and the Bombay Presidency Association. In the course of the Bardoli satyagraha he was converted to Gandhi's political creed, resigned his seat on the legislative council, and was arrested during the Salt Satyagraha. He was appointed Home Member in the Kher ministry. After independence, he held important positions and served as Governor of UP from 1953 to 1958. He was closely associated with social reform causes and with educational institutions. He helped found the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan in 1938.

80. On the Viceroy's Declaration, Haig to Viceroy (Tel.), 19 October 1939

Haig Papers, Microfilm Roll No. 1, NMML

[Extract]

Today I saw Kidwai who has come to Naini Tal and questioned him about the effect of your Excellency's statement. I usually find him frank, and I think he was frank with me today. He has hitherto always been optimistic about a settlement; but today he said that the statement would be entirely unsatisfactory to the Congress, and he regarded it is inevitable that they would reject it.

He stressed in particular the form of the statement which he thought was very discouraging, with its references to the past. He said that if the substance of the statement could have been put in a different way, with emphasis on the future, it might not have been unacceptable; if it had been said, for instance, that MMG hoped that it would be possible for India to get Dominion Status at an early date after the war and that for that purpose they would at that time hold consultations and see whether a Constitution could be devised with agreement of the various interests and communities. He suggested that the only faint possibility of avoiding a break was if the emphasis could be turned round in that direction in the course of a debate in the Commons.

He told me he thought the Muslim League would also find the statement unsatisfactory as not holding out sufficient hope for advance in the future. I gathered that Jinnah has now really become anxious for an understanding with the Congress, and he seemed to suggest that the Muslim League might unite with the Congress in expressing dissatisfaction at the statement.

With regard to the future he said the ministry would have to await instructions, but he seemed to contemplate an early resignation and spoke of the possibility of the Congress ordering all Ministries to resign. I told him that as he knew I was disturbed about conditions in the Province

and that if the Ministry resigned I should find it necessary to take vigorous action against the left wing revolutionaries. At the same time I said I hoped that I should not be brought into any conflict with the Right Wing of the Congress, and that they would not take an active anti-war attitude. He seemed to appreciate the necessity for action against the left wing and gave me the distinct impression that the Right wing would not be at all anxious to be drawn into conflict with us, and would not wish to oppose war activities. He spoke indeed with some apprehension about the possibilities of India being attacked by Russia and clearly had in mind the danger of internal disturbances when external danger might be threatening...

81. (a) Draft Resolution for the AICC Session to be held at Wardha on 7th October 1939

File No. G-49/1939, AICC Papers, India and the War, NMML

The AICC has carefully considered the statements of the British Premier on Britain's war aims and has taken note of the attitude adopted by the Secretary of State for India and the Viceroy on the last statement of the Working Committee laying down India's position vis-a-vis the present war.

The AICC deplore that the British Government both in England and in India, notwithstanding their democratic protestation have promulgated emergency war measures which have instituted a fascist regimentation of public life suppressing freedom of press, speech and association.

British Government have promulgated Ordinances, passed Government of India Act Amendment Bill and taken other far-reaching measures which affect the Indian people vitally and circumscribe and limit the powers and activities of the provincial Governments.

The Government have used the Ordinance to completely suppress all normal political activity and press especially in the Punjab and in Bengal to make numerous arrests of the Political workers and in one case to ruthlessly suppress the just economic struggle of the Workers (at Digboi).

The Government have now placed on the Statute Book the Defence of India Act embodying all the provisions of the Ordinance in the face of the known disapproval of the Congress MLA's and the protest of the other elected member of the Central Assembly.

Government through its day-to-day war measures regarding the appropriation of Indian resources for war and the transfer of Indian troops abroad etc. is committing India to a policy to which she is not a party and of which, she disapproves.

In view of all these developments and in view of the attitude adopted by the British Government on the last Working Committee on war the Indian National Congress declares:

That the Indian people will not participate in the present war which they are convinced is being fought by Britain to defend the imperialist *status quo* and to consolidate imperialism in India and elsewhere.

That while Congress abhors both fascism and imperialism and supports the fight for world democracy, it is the free Indian Nation that alone can determine what our policy in a war shall be. When freedom is achieved the Congress will place its own point of view before the free nation but till then it cannot support the war in anyway.

That nothing can convince the Indian people that the present war is being fought for democracy as long as Ordinances and Defence of India Act and other war measures continue to strangle the normal political life and civil liberties of the Indian people, as long as her right to self-determination and complete independence is not conceded, as long as immediate steps are not taken to enforce that right through measures which ensure full popular control by the Indian people of their Army, the industrial and economic development of the country and the foreign policy.

The AICC therefore adopts the following programme of action:

1. The Ministries must refuse to submit to the restrictions imposed upon by the Ordinances and by the Defence of India Act, must refuse to assist in war measures and actively non-co-operate in war preparations and face dismissal.
2. The campaign of mass resistance against war measures would be inaugurated by an All-India Day of Protest (strike and hartal) against Imperialist war, against Ordinances and other imposed war measures. On this day declare our sympathy with the Polish people, condemn Chamberlain's and Hitler's policy which lead to war and appeal to the British and French people to convert this imperialist war into a war to end both imperialism and fascism.
3. Boycott of British goods.
4. Resistance to the curtailment of the freedom of press, organisation and association, through the Ordinances and the Defence of India Act.
5. Resumption of struggle for democracy in the States.
6. Mass campaign to stop transfer of men, money and material for the imperialist war.

The AICC authorizes the Working Committee to appoint a broad Council of Action which would be fully representative of the Committee and whose task would be to take all measures to inaugurate, organise and carry through the campaign, to guide and lead the provincial committees and Councils of Action and to take all precautions ensuring the fullest unity and discipline within the organisation and ensuring the support and co-operation of Labour and Kisan organisation.

(b) Viceroy's Statement Unsatisfactory: Congress Decision

Hindu, 23 October 1939

The Congress Working Committee has passed the following resolution at Wardha (22 October 1939) on the Viceregal declaration:

The Working Committee is of opinion that the Viceroy's statement in answer to the Congress invitation for a clear declaration of the British war aims, particularly in their application to India, is wholly unsatisfactory and calculated to rouse resentment among all those who are anxious to gain, and are intent upon gaining, India's independence. This invitation was made not only on behalf of the people of India, but of the millions of people all over the world who were weary of war and violence and of the Fascist and Imperialistic systems which exploited nations and peoples and were ultimately the causes of war and who yearned for a new order of peace and freedom. The Viceroy's statement is an unequivocal reiteration of the old imperialist policy.

The Committee regards the mention of the differences amongst the several parties as a screen to hide the true intentions of Great Britain. What the Committee, had asked for was a declaration of the war aims as a test of Britain's *bona fides* regarding India, irrespective of the attitude of opposing parties and groups. The Congress has always stood for the amplest guarantee of the rights of minorities. The freedom the Congress claimed was not for the Congress or any particular group or community, but for the nation and all communities in India that go to build that nation. The only way to establish this freedom and to ascertain the will of the nation as a whole is through a democratic process which gives full opportunity to all. The Committee must therefore regard the Viceroy's statement as in every way unfortunate.

In the circumstances, it cannot possibly give any support to Great Britain, for it would amount to an endorsement of the imperialist policy which the Congress has always sought to end.

As a first step in this direction the Committee calls upon the Congress Ministries to tender their resignations. The Committee earnestly appeals to the nation to end all internal controversies in this hour of great crisis and to act unitedly in the cause of India's freedom.

Congressmen Warned Against Hasty Action

The Committee calls upon all Congress Committees and Congressmen generally to be prepared for all developments and eventualities, and to show restraint of word and deed so that nothing may be said or done which is not in keeping with India's honour or the principles for which the Congress stands.

The Committee warns Congressmen against any hasty action in the shape of civil disobedience, political strike and the like. The Committee will watch the situation and the activities of the British Government in India and will not hesitate to guide the country to take further steps whenever the necessity for this arises.

'Need for Perfect Discipline'

The Committee desires to impress upon all Congressmen that a programme of resistance to be commensurate with the magnitude of the issue before the country, requires perfect discipline within the Congress ranks and the consolidation of the Congress organisation. The Working Committee realises that the non-violent resistance offered by the Congress in the past has been sometimes mixed with violence.

The Committee desires to impress upon all Congressmen that any resistance that may have to be offered must be purged of all violence and to remind them of the pledges taken to this effect as early as 1921 during the Congress session at Ahmedabad and repeated on many subsequent occasions.

(c) The Congress Decision

Editorial, *Hindu*, 23 October 1939

The resolution in which the Congress Working Committee calls upon the Congress Ministries to tender their resignations reveals the high sense of responsibility as well as the resoluteness in seeking national ends that is the secret of the Congress hold on the country. It is in no spirit of petulance that the Congress has acted; and the whole tenor of the resolution is the very antithesis of that waiting upon opportunity of which its critics have glibly accused the Congress when they protested that it was trying to 'bargain' with Britain in this crisis. Freedom for India is a fundamental claim which can be abated only by being fulfilled; till that happens it must be India's supreme preoccupation and it is idle to blame the Congress for raising that claim at any time on the ground that it is 'untimely'. It is, on the other hand, peculiarly timely now. A war to exorcise the spirit of aggression must, as the Working Committee points out, logically aim at nothing less than 'a new order of peace and freedom' for the world as a whole. And the Congress asked for nothing more than that this aim should be consciously adopted by Britain and its logical consequences should be frankly faced and resolutely worked out so far as her dealings with India are concerned.

Britain not only refuses to do this; she clouds the issue by dragging in the minorities problem. But no minority has suggested that it is against Indian freedom. As for the Congress, whose authority to speak for the vast majority of Indians cannot seriously be disputed and which, unlike any communal organisation, is anxious to win the right to speak for *every* Indian by winning his confidence, it states the bare truth when it declares that it has always stood for the amplest guarantee of the rights of the minorities. 'The freedom the Congress claimed' runs the Working Committee

resolution, 'was not for the Congress or any particular group or community, but for the nation and all communities in India that go to build that nation. The only way to establish this freedom and to ascertain the will of the nation as a whole is through a democratic process which gives full opportunity to all'. No doubt Mr Jinnah and the Muslim League are opposed to democracy, and contend that it will perpetuate the domination of a communal majority. But in the *Harijan* article which we extracted the other day, Gandhiji has with his usual clarity and fundamental grip of realities exposed this myth of a permanent communal majority bestriding India like a colossus and imposing Hindu (or is it Brahman?) Raj on Muslims, Christians *et al.* Mr Jinnah himself furnished conclusive proof in corroboration of Gandhiji's thesis when he made it known to the world that he had been commissioned to put before the Viceroy not only the views of a Hindu minority like the Scheduled classes, but also the views of a Hindu majority like the non-Brahmans in Madras! That the self-styled spokesmen of these communities who thus delegated their powers to Mr Jinnah do not enjoy the confidence of these communities should not be allowed to obscure the fact that Mr Jinnah and the Muslim League do not in reality think that Hindu domination is a possibility, but are afraid of the political power and prestige that the Congress has achieved by dint of service, and are therefore out to exploit the 'communal majority' bogey for all it is worth. The simple truth, as the Working Committee resolution emphasises, is that only under democracy would it be possible for every section to enjoy its just rights without trenching on those of others. The Congress solution is thus a greater safeguard of minority interests than anything they have themselves been able to suggest.

Consistently with national self-respect and with its own declared policy the Congress could not have acted otherwise than it has done in asking the Ministries to tender their resignations. But obviously the matter cannot be allowed to rest there. Such further action as the Congress may take in pursuit of its policy will depend on what Britain does next. Neither the installation of puppet Ministries nor the suspension of the Constitution will be a solution of the problem that confronts His Majesty's Government, because neither alternative will avail to secure the consent of the people without which the administration cannot be run for any length of time, especially when a great crisis like the present must make unusually heavy demands upon its resources, material and moral. The Viceroy admitted that 'on certain points I have not, to my knowledge, been able to give assurances so comprehensive as those which would, I know, have been welcomed in certain political quarters in India'. The past few days have made it abundantly clear that it is not only the Congress, but every party in the country not excluding the Muslim League, that considers the Viceroy's declaration as altogether unsatisfactory; the common denominator is discontent at Britain still arrogating to herself the power to decide India's destiny. After two and a half years of Provincial Autonomy it would be absurd to question India's fitness for self-government. And, as Mr C. Rajagopalachari has pertinently pointed out, if the deep distrust of India which has British Policy for generations has not been dissipated by the actual record of popular Ministries in office, we must bid good-bye to all hopes of constitutional progress; if, on the other hand, it has been dissipated, then there is no excuse whatever for refusing to promise that India shall have the fullest self-government when the war is over and to make forthwith such changes in the Central Government in this direction as war exigencies would permit. For such a change there is constitutional as well as a topical necessity. The war may last for a number of years and, as the Federal Scheme has been suspended, unless there is such change as the Congress has advocated, this would mean indefinite continuation of bureaucratic government at the Centre. 'It would be,' as Mr Rajagopalachari justly observes, 'intolerable to maintain the permanent Service control over, and encroaching on, the field of the eleven Governments in the Provinces, shaped in the frame of democracy'. Besides, it would be impossible for a bureaucratic Government to organise

the country for war with anything like that efficiency and enthusiasm which only a popular Government would be able to command. Mr Rajagopalachari rightly says that the conditions made by the Congress 'were conceived, not to take advantage of the war situation, but indeed to provide for the war situation'. It is not yet too late for Britain to rectify her blunder in rejecting these conditions; for, the Congress has with remarkable self-restraint decided to do nothing which might make it difficult for His Majesty's Government to retrace their steps. We have no doubt that the appeal of the Congress to the people to maintain disciplined patience at this critical hour will be fully responded to. We would fain hope that Britain will show herself in an equally reasonable frame of mind.

82. On Resignation of the UP Ministry

Haig to Viceroy (Tel.: Immediate), 23 October 1939, Acc. No. 2068, NAI

I discussed this evening with Kidwai question of resignation of Ministry. He said their instructions were to tender their resignations not later than 31st October unless there was some important practical work to be completed, in which case they might remain in office for a few days longer. They would also be prepared to meet my convenience by remaining in office for a day or two after resignations were tendered in order to enable me to complete my preparations. He suggested that they might tender their resignations on the 31st. I said that while I greatly appreciated the consideration they were showing I felt that it placed both the Ministers and myself in a false position if the Ministry remained in office for any length of time after it had been irrevocably announced that they were going to resign. It really meant that any business involving a possible difference of opinion between us was paralysed. Nor was there any particular question that required to be finished off. Kidwai fully agreed with these views and said that they would be prepared to tender their resignations on any date that might be convenient to me. I suggested that as they were passing their resolution on the 26th it might be convenient if the resignation were tendered on the 28th. He said he was quite agreeable to this programme. I told him however that before expressing a final view I would consult your Excellency.

I am assuming that nothing can now happen which will prevent the resignation of the Ministry. On that assumption I feel strongly that delay will be inexpedient. Our subversive forces will from now onwards intensify preparations and I am anxious not to wait unnecessarily before taking action. I should be grateful if you would let me know whether there is any objection to my Ministers tendering resignations on the 28th.

83. Resignation of Congress Ministry in Bombay:

Governor of Bombay to Viceroy (Telegram), 23 October 1939

Linlithgow Collection, Acc. No. 2339, NAI

I shall see Kher today expect to discover from him the date on which Ministry intends to resign.¹

Meanwhile, I must put to you the problem, so far as I estimate it at present, which will arise on their resignation, which, though local may have its entanglements with all-India policy.

There is some desire in local Muslim League circles to try and form a Ministry in coalition with other groups. Muslims are 8.9 per cent of the population of this province and have 26 members in an Assembly of 175. It is at present uncertain how many of the other groups would join such a coalition, but at the best I do not expect it to command more than 55 votes and probably less. The idea would be to carry on without meeting of the Legislature, relying on Governor's special powers

to certify a budget, or to obtain a majority in the Legislatures when a sufficient number of Congress members have been jailed.

Without going into the merits or possibilities of either of these devices, the objections to such a Ministry seem to be three—

- (a) it would inevitably want to find methods of popularizing itself and Government would frequently be faced with a request to agree to measures probably unsound and possibly inconsistent with prosecution of war, which would have no legislative or popular sanction behind them.
- (b) I would not be too certain that it would be willing to deal drastically with Congress if that were required.
- (c) I have no doubt that formation of such a Ministry would infuriate Congress and precipitate a hostile movement against us. This last consideration seems most important. Against these objections there is our desire not to refuse the help of those willing to help us, and also the general expectation in non-Congress circles that either an interim Ministry or non-official advisers will be found.

In the light of the above considerations my best course appears to be that on resignation of Ministry, I should send for the leader of Muslim League (who is leader of Opposition) and ask him what prospects he has of formation of a Ministry which could carry on in a normal way and suggest that he explore possibilities with leaders of other groups. If, as seems certain, his eventual reply is that he cannot form a Ministry or that he can only form one without a majority and which would have to rely on some device. I would tell him that at present I think it undesirable to form a Ministry which could not function under the present Constitution but that I would value his general support and would keep in constant touch with him and other leaders who had offered their help.

I should be glad to know whether this course, which appears to me the best solution of our local problem, would fit in with your general policy. The Congress resolution is to be moved on the 25th. Resignation may follow at once, so matter is urgent and I would be grateful for your advice.

¹ The following resolution was adopted on 27 October. 'This Assembly regrets that the British Government have made India a participant in the war between Great Britain and Germany without the consent of the people of India and have further, in complete disregard of Indian opinion, passed laws and adopted measures curtailing the powers and activities of provincial governments'.

84. Political scene in Bombay, Governor's Assessment: Governor of Bombay to Viceroy (Tel.), 24 October 1939

Linlithgow Papers, Acc. No. 2339, NAI

[Extract]

Gandhi's interview, published today, suggest that there is substance in the view that a large section of Congress still remains as reluctant to have a crisis as we are. On that assumption I would like to urge that position in this province points to great desirability of taking any possible step, short of letting down the minorities, which might prevent a crisis. I felt it the more necessary to stress my view from this province because of the disquieting conclusion of *Birmingham Post* that to offer more to Congress would be to risk an upheaval in India. To a province like Bombay, where minorities do not count for very much and where a civil disobedience movement, if it came to

that, would put officers to greatest strain, such a conclusion appears strangely unbalanced and is the opposite of the picture as seen from here. It is disquieting to see that opinion at Home is not being prepared by the Government Press for the serious consequences of a fight with Congress. May I also mention here a point which gives me some concern that, if serious trouble starts, there will be a great clamour from the Opposition at Home to make concessions and that there might be circumstances which would cause the Government to take the view that the overriding consideration must be the maintenance of a united front at Home during war and they would give way to the clamour. That course would so damage the position and machinery of the Government here that there would seem to be every advantage in going further now, if we can, rather than later. This view I put forward as suiting the position of Bombay in case it may serve to balance the views of other provinces or correct the dangerous illusions of the *Birmingham Post* that the only trouble to be met is from the minorities.

85. Resignation of Congress Ministry in Assam

Valmiki Choudhary (ed.), *Rajendra Prasad: Correspondence and Select Documents*, Vol. 4, p. 196

I am sure it is useless to think of the last resolution on War given us at Wardha on 12th October.¹ It must have been amended in accordance with the Viceregal statement, and I expect that the amended resolution must be on its way to us. We will have our government meeting on 30 October, and we expect to receive the draft before that date if it is necessary to pass a resolution before resignation. If we do not get one, we will draft one. Our sitting of the Assembly. The Ministry consisting of 8 Ministers, with the exception of one, would be glad to resign on this issue—and even the 8th is not unwilling.

An alternative Ministry may bit be impossible in our Province, although I am sure it would not be quite an easy affair. But whatever it is, Congress portion of the party, consisting of thirty-three in the party of fifty-seven members, would be broken-hearted if they are not allowed their due share in this rightful fight. Therefore, I hope there will be no condition in our resignation. I am writing all this to avoid delay of further correspondence.

The AICC met at Wardha on 9-10 October under the Presidentship of Rajendra Prasad. For full text of resolution on war, see *Indian Annual Register*, Vol. II, pp. 231-32

86. Resignation of Congress Ministries:

Kailas Narain Haksar¹ to T.B. Sapru, 25 October 1939

Sapru Papers (20), NMML

The decision of the AICC that the Congress Ministries must resign bodes no good. I feel that the action of the hotheads of the Congress party will not stop at the resignation of the Ministries, as a protest against irresponsiveness of Britain. They would start civil disobedience in some shape or other with or without Mahatmaji's consent.

Your condemnation of the Congress Ministries and more particularly of the UP Ministry is justified by the inappropriateness of various policies—all of a financial bearing—introduced by them. But I doubt if they are responsible for the creation of the Khaksar movement. Now that the Government is going to resign and as probably no interim Ministries will be formed, I should like to see how Harry Haig or Maurice Hallet deals with that situation in these difficult times. Munshi, the Home Minister of Bombay, has enjoyed the reputation of being a strong man because he has

not hesitated to take drastic action on the orthodox British line in the prevention and suppression of disorder. I do not know the facts, but I was under the impression that the UP Government too, whether in dealing with the Shia-Sunni dispute in its aspect of disturbing the public peace, or with the Khaksar movement, had not shown a want of courage and strength to take proper action, however inept their policy may have been in regard to the former and perhaps also the latter...

¹ Kailas Narain Haksar (b. 1878); educated at Victoria College, Gwalior, Allahabad University; private secretary to the Maharaja Scindia, 1903-12 and senior member of the Board of Revenue, 1909-14; delegate to both Round Table Conferences, political member, Gwalior urban (1912-37); Prime Minister of the Baroda State in 1930-39; personal adviser to the Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir and guardian to the heir apparent, from 1939 to 1943.

87. Resignation of Congress Ministries:

Sapru to Kailas Narain Haksar, 30 October 1939

Sapru Papers (20), NMML

I agree with you that the decision of the AICC is most unfortunate. The Congress Governments have not been defeated in the legislative bodies, they have not lost the confidence of the electorate which might have been inferred to be the case if they had lost a few bye-elections; nor has there been a clash between them and the Governors anywhere. From a strictly constitutional point of view, therefore, there is not the least possible justification for their resignations. My whole point is that neither now nor at any time has the Congress worked the constitution as a responsible government. They owe responsibility to the High Command and the Working Committee but not to the legislature or the electorate. This is the very negation of responsible Government.

I expect that the Viceroy has by now received instructions from the Secretary of State that he must see the Congress and the League leaders and try to explain things to them and to win them over.... My own feeling is that some sort of a truce will be patched up and the Congress Ministers will then be told to stay on. I agree that the nature of the Viceroy's statement was very far from being persuasive. I also agree that it should have been more definite, but can you or any one at the present moment draft a declaration which would satisfy the Congress and the Muslim League and the other minorities alike. No doubt there is no disposition to trust the British word in India but with Jinnah raising his cry against democracy and claiming a separate recognition of his body and with the Mahatma claiming the right of the Congress representing every one I cannot see how a definite declaration which would please both could be made.

Meanwhile the Provincial Governors are making their bandobast on the assumption that the negotiations with the Congress may ultimately fail. I have good reasons to believe that there will be no minority Ministries or advisers but that the Governors will have official advisers. Yesterday a friend of mine, who is in high position, told me that all the Bengal terrorists had moved on to the UP and that Kanpur, Unao, Lucknow and Allahabad were their centers. If the Congress Ministry should resign these fellows are bound to create trouble whether the Mahatma likes it or does not like this....

88. The UP Ministry resigns: G.B. Pant to Haig, 30 October 1939

Haig Papers, Acc. No. 2068, NAI

Dear Sir Harry Haig,

You are no doubt aware that the statement issued by HE the Viceroy in response to the request made by the Working Committee of the Indian National Congress asking for a clear

exposition of Britain's war aims in general and particularly in relation to India, has been almost universally held in this country to be disappointing and unsatisfactory. The pronouncements subsequently made by responsible Ministers of His Majesty on this subject have not allayed this feeling of dissatisfaction. It was confidently expected that the present war, which, it is professed, is being waged to preserve freedom for small and weaker nations in Europe would also mean the attainment of similar freedom and independence by India. It was recognised that the framing of a constitution for a free India could perhaps not be conveniently undertaken during the preoccupations of the war, but it was felt that consistently with this principle substantial transference of power in the administration of the internal and external affairs of the country could be made forthwith. If India is expected to help in the conduct of the war it can only do so on the basis of willing and voluntary cooperation and on terms of absolute equality. I regret to say that in the Viceroy's statement and the other pronouncements to which I have referred there is no clear recognition of this claim and nothing to inspire confidence. On the other hand undue stress has been laid on sectional differences and they have been made a plea for delaying India's freedom. My colleagues and I myself therefore feel that it is impossible for us to cooperate with the British Government in the management of affairs, and particularly in the conduct of the war in so far as the task may devolve upon Provincial Governments, in the absence of a satisfactory settlement of this essential problem. The Provincial Legislative Assembly also has passed this afternoon by an overwhelming majority a resolution expressing the same opinion, a copy of which I enclose. I beg therefore to tender hereby the resignation of my colleagues and myself, who are Members of the Council of Ministers in the United Provinces.

I take this opportunity to express our thanks to you for the courtesy and guidance which we have received from you in the discharge of the duties pertaining to our office.

Yours sincerely,

'This Assembly regrets that the British Government have made India a participant in the war between Great Britain and Germany without the consent of the people of India and have further in complete disregard of Indian opinion passed laws and adopted measures curtailing the powers and activities of the Provincial Governments. This Assembly recommends to the Government to convey to the Government of India and through them to the British Government that in consonance with the avowed aims of the present war, it is essential in order to secure the cooperation of the Indian people that the principles of democracy with effective safeguards for the Muslims and other minorities be applied to India and her policy be guided by her people; and that India should be regarded as an independent nation entitled to frame her own constitution and further that suitable action should be taken in so far as it is possible in the immediate present to give effect to that principle in regard to present governance of India. This Assembly regrets that the situation in India has not been rightly understood by His Majesty's Government when authorizing the statement that has been made on their behalf in regard to India, and in view of this failure of the British Government to meet India's demand this Assembly is of opinion that the Government cannot associate itself with British policy.'

89. Resignation of Ministries

Leader, 30 October 1939

30 October 1939

The attitude that the Muslim League will adopt when the Congress Ministries resign is indicated by Jinnah in a statement to the Associated Press. He says:

I have already sent to the Viceroy a copy of resolution of the Working Committee about the decision taken on 22nd Oct.¹ Until I hear from him I do not wish to express any opinion with regard to the debate that took place in the House of Commons, particularly the speech² of Sir Samuel Hoare³ on behalf of the British Government.

I am informed that the Madras Ministry has tendered resignation⁴ and other Congress Ministries will similarly follow. So far as the Muslim League parties are concerned in the various legislatures, although it is premature to decide finally as to the course we should adopt, it seems to me that it is inadvisable to consider the question of forming interim Ministries where the Congress is in overwhelming majority.

In the event of the Governors deciding to act under Sec. 93 we shall have to consider the terms of the proclamation and the provisions that may be embodied therein.

¹ The Working Committee expressed satisfaction at the Viceroy's statement and authorized Jinnah to seek further clarification on a few contentious issues. Special notice was made of the government's recognition of the League as the spokesman of India's Muslims.

² Replying to the debate on India in the House of Commons initiated by Wedgwood Benn, Samuel Hoare had stated: 'There are now two kinds of dominion status that we contemplated: the dominion status which has been described by Mr Wedgwood Benn—Dominion Status of 1926. That dominion status is not a prize that is given to a deserving community but is the recognition of the facts that actually exist. As soon as these facts exist in India, and in my views the sooner they exist the better, the aim of our policy will be achieved. If there are difficulties in the way, they are not of our making. They are inherent in the many divisions between classes and communities in the great subcontinent. It must be the aim of Indians themselves to remove these divisions just as it should be our aim to help Indians in their task.'

³ Samuel Hoare (1880–1959); Conservative Party delegate to the three sessions of Indian Round Table Conference, 1930–32; member of the Joint Parliamentary Committee on Indian Constitutional Reforms (1933–34); Secretary of State for India from 1931 to 1935; Foreign Secretary, 1935; first Lord of Admiralty (1936–37); Home Secretary (1937–39); Lord Privy Seal and member of the war cabinet in 1939–40

⁴ The Government of Madras was first to implement the decision of the Congress Working Committee to withdraw Congress Governments in the provinces. The Prime Minister moved the following resolution on 26 October in the Madras Legislative Assembly: 'This Assembly regrets that the British Government have made India a participant in the war between Great Britain and Germany without the consent of the people of India, and have further in complete disregard of Indian opinion passed laws and adopted measures curtailing the powers and activities of the Provincial Governments. The Assembly recommends to the Government to convey to the Government of India and through them to the British Government that in consonance with the avowed aims of the present war, it is essential in order to secure the cooperation of the Indian people that the principles of democracy be applied to India and her policy to be guided by her people, and that India should be regarded as an independent nation, entitled to frame her own constitution, and further that suitable action should be taken in so far as it is possible in the immediate present to give effect to that principle in regard to the present governance of India, including arrangements whereby all war measures in this Province may be undertaken with the consent of and executed through, the Provincial Government. This Assembly profoundly regrets that the situation in India has not been rightly understood by His Majesty's Government when authorising the statement that has been made on their behalf in regard to India'.

90. The Resignation and After

Editorial, *Tribune*, 31 October 1939

31 October 1939

Now that some of the Congress ministries have actually resigned and the resignation of others is sure to take place during the next three or four days, the question which is naturally agitating the public mind is, what is going to happen after the resignation? It has been stated, and we believe the statement correctly represents the position, that the resignations will not be accepted immediately, and that the ministries are expected to continue to function until they have been relieved. For this there are two reasons. One is the constitutional convention under which the Governors can legitimately ask the ministries to continue in office until they have had reasonable

time to explore the possibilities of alternative ministries or, if no such ministries are available, to decide what other course they should follow to carry on the administration of the provinces. The other is the prevailing belief that the Viceroy's statement, on the inadequacy and unsatisfactory nature of which the resignations of the ministries are based, is not the last word. That this belief is not entirely without foundation is shown by two facts. One is that Sir Samuel Hoare's Speech¹ in the Common debate admittedly marks a slight advance on the Viceroy's declaration. The other is that in spite of the resignation of the ministries the Viceroy adheres to his original decision to have further consultations with the Congress leaders.² It is hardly believable that he would have done so if his declaration had been the last word, and if His Excellency had been convinced that he had nothing to add, whether by way of amplification or of interpretation of his declaration, which might conceivably lead to a change in the Congress ministries' decision. It is quite obvious that the Governors cannot possibly create a more or less irrevocable position by accepting the resignation of the ministries, while the possibility of a change in the Congress decision and with it of the withdrawal of their resignation by the Congress ministries is there.

As it is, only in one province has the Governor taken even a preliminary step towards exploring the possibilities of an alternative ministry. We refer, of course, to the case of Madras, where the Governor sent for the leader of the opposition and asked for his assistance in forming a Council of Ministers. But the experience of the Madras Governor in this matter is not likely to encourage other Governors to follow in his footsteps. The leader of the Opposition³ has informed the Governor that 'in the existing circumstances he must respectfully decline the invitation to assist His Excellency in forming a Council of Ministers'. Those circumstances, as stated, by the Opposition leader, are (1) that 'the resignation of the ministers is only a temporary attempt on the part of the Congress to force the British Government to accept the Congress demand', and (2) that 'there are indications of further negotiations between the Viceroy and the Congress'. 'Neither ground is without plausibility. But the Opposition leader omitted to state the most important reason for his inability to form a ministry. How can he form a ministry in a province in which the number of Congress members in the legislature is 162 out of a total of 215 members? What is true of Madras is equally true of the UP, Bihar, Orissa and the CP. The only provinces in which the position is somewhat doubtful are Assam and the Frontier Province, in both of which there are coalition Governments, and in neither of which is the position of the Congress Party vis-à-vis all the non-Congress elements put together is so overwhelmingly strong as it is in the five provinces to which we have referred. In Bombay the Congress party and the non-Congress elements are more or less evenly balanced, but the very reason why the Congress party in the Bombay Legislature has hitherto been able to carry on without entering into a coalition with any other party will, it may be assumed, make it difficult for a non-Congress ministry to function successfully even if one is formed.

Should the Congress ministries, therefore, adhere to their decision to relinquish the responsibilities of office, as they are sure to do in the event of no understanding being reached between the Congress and the British government, the Governors in all or most of the eight Congress-governed provinces will in all probability have resource to section 93 of the Government of India Act and assume the responsibilities of government themselves. We say this because the only constitutional remedy that is open to them in the circumstances—that of dissolution—is not likely to commend itself to them for two reasons. One is the existence of war conditions; the other is the practical certainty that an appeal to the electorate would result in the return of the Congress Party in all the eight provinces with the same, if not with increased, strength. To the people of India themselves neither is a good or valid reason for the British government not trying this alternative. The procedure laid down in section 93 is a drastic and emergency provision, which ought not to and cannot properly be resorted to unless and until all constitutional methods have

been tried and have failed. It would be opposed to all sound constitutional principles to try this method simply because one or more ministries commanding large majorities in the legislatures have resigned over a specific issue. On that basis the constitutional government which the British Government claims to have established in the province of India would be worth nothing. All the more would the Indian public consider this drastic course inexpedient and unjustifiable, because they are wholly unconvinced that a proper and reasonable understanding cannot be reached between the British Government and the Congress.

After all, the Congress is not asking for the moon. It is not even asking for anything which it is difficult for the British Government to concede. It is asking for two things and only two, first, that the principles of freedom and democracy for which [the] British professes to be fighting the war should be applied to India as soon after the war as arrangements to that end can be made, and secondly that as an earnest of the British Government's intention of applying those principles to India after the war, they should immediately give Indians as full a measure of responsibility at the centre as may be found practicable and in particular should give India's chosen representatives the same power of directing and controlling India's war policy and activities which the civil Governments in the Dominions claim and exercise. Which of these demands is unreasonable, extravagant or impossible? The question whether the minorities are or are not entitled to have their rights and interests properly safeguarded is wholly irrelevant to the main issue, which is one essentially of the position of India as a whole vis-à-vis Britain. Let the British Government declare their willingness to give India the independence she wants immediately and ultimately, and then let them leave it to India herself, including the minorities, to decide, how she should exercise this independence, or how the majority should share political power with the minorities. What makes their position wholly unreasonable is their determination not to part with their present irresponsible power at the centre unless and until the divisions which they themselves have been largely instrumental in bringing about and which owe their continued existence in no small measure to the encouragement of the separatist sections of the minorities continue and will not disappear unless and until the British Government either undo the mischief their past policy has done or definitely step aside and let the people of India solve their internal problem as best they may. To our mind the duty of the Viceroy as representing the British Government in India is perfectly clear. He should at the forthcoming interviews with the Mahatma and other Congress leaders so explain the position of Britain as to bring it into conformity with the Congress demand. He should assure the Congress that the difference between the British Government and itself is one of form and phraseology and not one of spirit and substance, that it is their intention to give India after the war the same freedom to manage her affairs as the Dominions possess and then immediately they will be given as large a measure of control and responsibility at the centre as is compatible with the war conditions. Should His Excellency adopt this course we have no doubt in our mind that the grave constitutional crisis with which India is threatened will promptly disappear, and India will once again assume the even tenor of her ways.

¹ The speech created a favourable impression in unofficial quarters and his reference to the possibility of expanding the Viceroy's council was well received by the Congress and Muslim League leaders.

² The Viceroy issued invitations to the leaders of the Congress and of the Muslim League to meet him at New Delhi. The invitations were assumed to be in connection with consultations envisaged in Samuel Hoare's speech in the House of Commons.

³ Kumarraja Muthiah Chetiar (b.1905); educated at Presidency College, Madras; member, Provincial Banking Enquiry Committee, Madras, 1922; member of the Madras legislative council; first Mayor of Madras, 1933; minister for education and public health and pro-chancellor of the Madras University (1936-37); member of the Madras legislative assembly in 1937 and minister for local self-government; elected leader of the opposition in the Madras legislative assembly in 1937

91. Was it Worthwhile? The Congress Experiment of Office-Acceptance¹*Hindustan Times*, 31 October 1939

31 October 1939

Now that the Ministries are going or have gone, it may be useful to reflect objectively on the results of this short experiment of office-acceptance by the Congress. This enquiry may be conducted under three heads. Was this experiment worth making? Was it utilised to the fullest advantage? What lessons does it convey for any future experiment we may have to make?

It is hardly possible to give a categorical reply to the question whether the experiment was worth making for the simple reason that it could only be a matter of conjecture as to what would have happened if the Congress had declined to accept office in 1937. It is possible that a persistent attempt would have been made to rally all the reactionary and anti-Congress elements in an effort to suppress the Congress. The latter might have reacted by moving still further left and intensifying agrarian and labour unrest. Federation might have been speeded up and imposed on this country with the result that the main political struggle would have to be diverted against the Princes and the capitalist classes. It was equally possible that political confusion in India might have added to the difficulties of Britain in facing Hitler's challenge and induced her statesmen to offer new terms for Indian cooperation. It is futile to indulge in such speculation. But the experiment has had some definite and undeniable results on which a judgment can be based. It has once for all disposed of the bogey of inexperience in administration and the impracticability of many items of the Congress programme. The Congress Ministries have demonstrated that for efficient, responsible government what is needed is disinterested patriotism and not technical acquaintance of bureaucratic machinery which can be acquired at very short notice. The opponents of the Congress have been demoralized and in many places they have practically disappeared from the political fields. The masses have tasted power, and politics has assumed an aspect of reality which no amount of agitation would have enabled it to assume. For all these reasons, I am convinced that the experiment was worth making...

The second issue is far more important. Has the brief period of office acceptance been utilised to the fullest advantage? I wish I could answer it in the affirmative, but I am afraid I cannot. In every province where the Congress has ruled these twenty-seven months, many good things have been done and many wrongs righted. In my own province of Madras, the load of debt which has been removed from the heads of peasants cannot be re-imposed, the temples which have been reopened to the Harijans can never again be closed to them, the raised salaries for new entrants cannot be revised, and the bureaucracy can never again assume its old tone of omniscience and arrogance. But there are other things which had to be left unfinished or undone and which could have been finished or done. The great experience of Prohibitions for which the Madras Premier has dreamed and worked for two decades has to be left in the middle. If he had not been such an orthodox financier, he could have enforced it all over the province and turned to be raising of new taxes. As it happened, he has actually imposed new taxes to cover a large part of the cost of prohibition, and it is to be seen whether the new government will be honest enough to utilize them for the purposes, for which they have been raised.

Valuable time was lost in making unnecessary enquiries about zamindars and land revenue problems, with the result that no concrete reform has been achieved, even though substantial relief could have been given on the basis of well-known facts. Above all, I am grieved at the failure to give the villagers some machinery of self-government which could have given scope for work for Congressmen during their next period of wandering in the wilderness.

I have no doubt similar tales of lost opportunities will be forthcoming in all the other Congress provinces. But it must not be forgotten that the time has been short and, before office acceptance, many of these problems had not been discussed in a practical fashion. The speed and output of legislative and other activity have been far in excess of anything to which the bureaucracy has been accustomed. It has also been a pity that many left-wingers were more intent on harassing the ministries than of (sic) getting the maximum out of them. Balancing all items together, the achievements of the Congress ministries, while transcending those of all their predecessors, can only be pronounced to be moderate by the standard of what might have been done.

This leads us to the last and vital question of what we should learn from this brief experiment... It is clear that no Ministries can be formed or function once more in similar conditions. Without the prospect of reasonable stability and adequate central responsibility, the Congress cannot take up office again. But all the time individuals and the Press have to be ready for an effective lead, whenever circumstances might call for a bigger experiment. There is need to remember that there is no finality in the life of nations and internal changes and external changes go hand in hand. British Imperialism is no monster which will be killed at a particular moment. It is rather a thick and blinding mist which will thin out and disappear, and between now and the final emancipation, the Congress may have to assume new positions like the one just now abandoned. It would be a mistake not to be prepared for them in a more thorough manner than we were prepared for the brief flash of provincial government.

¹ The article was authored by K. Santhanam (b. 1895), editor of *Indian Express* (1933-40); member of Central Legislative Assembly (1937-42); and, after independence, central minister for railways (1948-52) and member of the Rajya Sabha (1960-66). He was one of those who opposed the Quit India movement and differed with the Congress over the Cripps' offer.

92. 'The Congress Leaves Office

Editorial, *National Herald*, 1 November 1939; *SWJN*, Vol. 10, pp. 215-17

1 November 1939

[Extracts]

One by one the Congress ministries resign and retire from office and provincial autonomy functions no more. The Act of 1935 fades away and the country reverts to the autocratic or bureaucratic rule of the Indian Civil Service.¹ Thus ends an experiment begun two and a half years ago. History will judge of this experiment and of the role that the Congress ministries have played. But whatever that judgment might be, we for our part are convinced that the acceptance of office, with all its difficulties and pitfalls, was a necessary preliminary to the larger freedom to come. It was necessary not because a training was required in the art of government, but because it laid bare many of the essential problems to be faced. It showed us our own failings as well as the failings of others. It demonstrated how difficult, if not impossible, it was for the present structure of government, with its steel-frame the ICS—to deal with our problems; how we were hedged and circumscribed in every way, and how even the best-laid schemes of popular ministers could be shelved or hung up by unimaginative or hostile subordinates. Burn your files, was the advice of Mahatma Gandhi to the ministers,² and in that lay great wisdom. Files are perhaps necessary accompaniments to any ordered work, but a government which lives and thinks in files and cannot get out of this slow routine, is not fit and proper government for a country eager and anxious for innumerable changes and fast moving reforms in all directions. Gandhiji gave expression in his

pregnant phrase to the conviction that the old method of government, even with popular ministers stuck in somewhere, was an anachronism today.

The possibilities of provincial autonomy had long been exhausted, and it was evident to any close observer, even before the war, that the *status quo* could not continue for long. There had to be either going forward or going back, still, somehow, even these unstable conditions were allowed to continue for there was a reluctance to precipitate a conflict. But the shock of war has come to upset the structure.

The Congress ministries go and we would feign hope that they will not come back on the old conditions. There is no going back for any country today, and certainly not for India. Those who think that the new order changes giving place to old will find the error of their thought before many moons have waxed and waned. Monday's scene in the UP Assembly, when the long debate ended and the war resolution was passed by an overwhelming majority, was a memorable one.³ It showed, as not even the arguments had done, the spirit of the assembly, and the true significance of the ministerial resignations. The ministers did not resign because they were defeated.⁴ That resignation was their triumph and the triumph of the Congress and as such it was treated by the members. Surely, seldom could such a scene of enthusiasm have been witnessed in any assembly. The Congress had freed itself from the trammels of office and from the bondage of the Act of 1935. It breathed freely again and stretched out its limbs in happy freedom. The journey may be a difficult and arduous one, but we had cut our shackles and could go swiftly forward.

What has been the main achievement of the Congress ministries? There have been many critics of them and we ourselves are not enamoured of all they have done or the manner of doing it. But a day will come when even the bitterest critic will recognise the signal service the Congress ministries rendered to the country in spite of innumerable difficulties and often the most unfair criticism. We are not going to appraise or criticize their work now. But whether they have failed in this matter or not, they have set a high standard of integrity, of devoted work and, we say in spite of criticism to the contrary, of impartial administration. The realisation of all this will come more fully in the days to come.

But most of all, people will realise what civil liberties they have enjoyed under the Congress ministries when they begin to lose them, as they soon will. For the establishment and maintenance of civil liberties has been the outstanding achievement of these ministries, many indeed there are who say that they went too far in this direction.

In the United Provinces we had the good fortune to have as Prime Minister a man of outstanding character and ability, and we, in common with innumerable others, would like to pay our tribute of respect and admiration to him. He was and is the perfect gentleman, loved by his colleagues and respected by his opponents. Illness has long pursued him. That is the price he is paying for his great and devoted services to the people of his province. We trust that he will triumph over this illness soon for the country and his province want his services in the difficult days to come.

It was a moving sight to see some of the ministers bidding farewell to their office staff. Many of them were in tears and even the humble chaprasis wept as if something they had valued greatly was going out of their lives.

³ Sampurnanand said: 'Yes, it is a great relief to become ordinary citizen once more. After a little over two years, the people of this province will again be governed by an administration which will not be responsible, and cannot be expected to be responsive to public opinion. I am not sure if they will like this change, but no other course was open to us as Congress Ministers or as self-respecting Indians'. *Hindu*, 4 November 1939.

⁴ An official of the Bombay government had complained that there was no rest under the Congress ministry and that he did not know what to do with the ever-increasing pile of files. Gandhi promptly advised him to 'burn them'.

³ On 30 October 1939, the UP assembly passed by 127 votes to 2 the Congress ministry's resolution on war. It voiced the feeling of regret which the Viceroy's statement of 17 October had produced in the minds of the Indian people. It also regretted that the British government had made India a participant in the war without popular consent and had, in complete disregard of Indian opinion, passed laws and adopted measures curtailing the powers of the provincial government.

⁴ Kailash Nath Katju, Minister of Justice; stated: 'I am glad that the Governor has put an end to an increasingly embarrassing position by accepting the resignations tendered to him by the Cabinet on Monday last. I am fully conscious of the fact that the situation is without parallel in constitutional history. Here is a Ministry which indisputable commands not only an overwhelming majority inside the Legislature but also the support and approval of vast masses of its countrymen for the policy adopted by the Indian National Congress. Yet, the ministry comes to the conclusion that it cannot carry on, because of the refusal or the hesitation of the British Government to accede to the national demand for declaration of the War aims in relation to India'.

'The constitution has broken down not because of the liability of Provincial Ministers to manage their affairs. The crisis has been created by the British Government in dragging India into War without consultation or consent and then not telling us where India really stood in at all'. *Hindu*, 4 November 1939.

93. The Congress Ministry in Bihar

Article entitled 'The Bihar Congress Government Thro' Bengali Eyes' by H.C. Mookerjee, President of the All India Conference of Indian Christians. *Searchlight*, 1 November 1939. See also enclosure: 1. Reforms in Bihar

1 November 1939

Our great national All-India Organisation has all along been subject to various kinds of criticism. One of these to which no satisfactory reply could be given in the past was that the Congress was, more or less, an organisation of the intelligent, educated middle class, that it had little, if any, concern with the masses who did not join it as they never cared for politics. Today the Congress members are more than 45 lakhs in number. These figures are, however, in a sense misleading for they give us only the number of those who have paid their subscriptions and joined our organisation formally. I am quite certain that those who sympathise with Congress ideals and wholeheartedly cooperate with the Congress in implementing its programme are many times this number. Where is the man who is bold enough to say today that the Congress is an organisation of the middle class or of the rich? Is there any one in India foolish enough to suggest that all or nearly all these 45 lakhs belong to the middle classes?

No political organisation can claim to be truly representative unless it contains within it members drawn from every social, economic and religious group. This proud distinction justly belongs to the Congress. If we have Kisans and Mazdors, clerks and teachers, lawyers and politicians, we have also bankers, industrialists and businessmen worth crores of rupees. Similarly, we have also representatives of every religious faith processed in India—Hindu and Muslim, Christian and Sikh, Zoroastrian and Buddhist. The one thing common to all Congressmen is the genuine desire to benefit and serve the masses. This utter negation of self, this ardent desire to serve the brother-Indian is so great that the cost involved is never taken into account.

Connecting from our great leader Mahatma Gandhi who cheerfully gave up a most lucrative practice in South Africa, we find Pandit Motilal Nehru's son our beloved Jawaharlal and his whole family sacrificing immense wealth on behalf of the national cause. Other instances in point are Sankerlal Banker,¹ Jamnalal Bajaj,² our C.R. Das,³ the young Muslim Umar Sobhani,⁴ one of the richest men in Bombay, the celebrated Dr Ansari⁵ and the famous Hakim Ajmal Khan.⁶ Who does not know the immense sacrifices of Rajendra Prasad, of Rajagopalachariar, of Pant, of Kher, and of Sinha, the premiers of the different Congress provinces? The list could be added to almost infinitely. These men have given up their all and have gladly exchanged comfort or rather luxury

for coarse Khaddar and a life spent in incessant labour and continuous sacrifice for our country's masses....

As I am writing this article primarily for readers in Bihar let me try to place before them my ideas of what the Bihar Congress cabinet has done for their province....

My contention is that the work of the Bihar Congress Government is merely a sample of what is being done by the Congress Ministries in all parts of India, for all these governments are seeking to put through, of course with slight modifications demanded by local conditions, one uniform plan, and aimed at benefiting our masses. If I succeed in convincing my readers that the Bihar Government is doing every thing which lies in its power to help our poor and ignorant brethren, I have proved, though indirectly, that the other Congress Governments are doing the same thing.

Agrarian Legislation

In Bihar a raiyat who cultivates land in a village for 12 years becomes a settled raiyat of that village. Every settled raiyat acquires occupancy rights which are inheritable without payment of any premium to the landlord, and also transferable subject to payment of landlord's fee amounting to 8 per cent of the consideration money. An occupancy raiyat cannot be ejected from his holding for non-payment of rent. He is entitled to dig wells or tanks in his holding, to erect a house on it, to make bricks for such house or well or tank and to plant and cut trees on it.

Among other things the new set-up provides for (1) the cancellation of all enhancements between January 1911 and December 1936, (ii) total or partial remission of rent in cases where the soil has deteriorated by deposit of sand or submersion under water or where the landlord had neglected the irrigation arrangements which he is bound to maintain, (iii) reduction of rent where there has been a fall in the average local prices of staple food crops not due to a temporary cause during the currency of the present rent; and (iv) settlement of fair rent in other suitable cases.

Formerly a raiyat's entire holding was sold in most cases for nominal prices. Now only that part of the holding will be sold which is, in the opinion of the court, sufficient to satisfy the decree. The raiyat has now been given complete immunity against arrest and detention in civil prison in execution of a decree for rent. Even his house and movables cannot be attached and sold in execution of such decrees. Illegal exactions by landlords or their agents have now been made a penal offence punishable with imprisonment, which may extend to six months or with fine which may extend to Rs 500 or with both.

On account of the economic depression which began in 1929, many raiyats were unable to pay the rent of their holdings with the result that many holdings were sold for arrears of rent and purchased by the landlords, in most cases, for nominal prices. To remedy this, the Bihar Restoration of Bakasht lands and Reduction of Arrears of Rent was enacted....⁷

What I regard as the most praise-worthy feature in agrarian legislation is that it was not carried with the help of the government majority but arrived at after discussion with the landlord group.

Organisation of the Sugar Industry

The sugar industry has developed very rapidly in recent years and large numbers of sugar factories have sprung up in Bihar. The cultivation of sugarcane has also increased by leaps and bounds. As the result of this the factories commenced taking undue advantage of the extensive cultivation of cane and the helplessness of the cane-growers. The Bihar Sugar Factories Control Act, 1937, was passed with a view to ensuring the progress of the industry on sound lines both in the interest of the grower and of the industry as a whole. The new Act provides for the licensing of sugar factories, regulation of the supply of cane and development of cane cultivation in factory 'zones', the encouragement of cane-growers, the organisation of cooperative societies and the elimination of

cut-throat competition between factories, besides fixation of minimum price for sugarcane and the establishment of a Sugar Control Board and Advisory Committees. As the result of this piece of legislation, a fair profit is ensured both to growers and manufacturers. It has to be stated in this connection that the attempt to fix the minimum price of an agricultural product grown over millions of acres was undertaken by the Bihar and UP Congress governments jointly, and also that it has met with unprecedented success.

Relief to Debtors

It has been stated authoritatively that 90 per cent of the population of Bihar are deeply in debt and, for all practical purposes, they are living in a perpetual state of bankruptcy.

The Bihar Money-Lenders' Act is designed to give relief to debtors by regulating moneylending within the province. Provision has been made for the registration of moneylenders who are bound to maintain proper accounts and give receipt to their debtors for all payments made. No one who is not a registered moneylender can institute any suit for the recovery of his dues from the debtor. The rates of interest have been fixed at not more than 9 per cent per annum in the case of secured and 12 per cent per annum in the case of unsecured loans. But in no case can a decree on account of interest be passed for an amount which exceeds the principal advanced.

Prohibition

Like all Congress governments, the Bihar Government is committed to the policy of prohibition of alcoholic beverages and narcotics. Prohibition was introduced in the districts of Saran with effect from the last April, 1939. This has an area of nearly 2,7000 square miles and a population of 10 lakhs. As a result of its policy, the Bihar Government did not renew the licenses of excise shops in this district. In other words, about 2150 licenses were cancelled which caused a loss in the revenue amounting to about Rs 10 lakhs. Government had also to think about 5000 odd people who were engaged in the business of supplying these articles. Many of them have been given land in Khas Mahal areas....

Since April 1939, the Bihar Government has extended prohibition to two other districts in the province—Ranchi and Hazaribagh. Between them, the total area of these two districts is 14,123 square miles and the population is approximately 31 lakhs. It is understood that with prohibition in these districts, the loss of revenue will be between 18 and 20 lakhs every year....

Imposition of new taxes

In order to find more money for nation-building activities and improving the condition of the rural masses, the Bihar Congress Government have imposed some new taxes. Of these fiscal measures, the most important is the Bihar Agricultural Income Tax Act. Next in importance are the Bihar Stamp (Amendment) Act and the Bihar Entertainments Duty Acts. The taxes which have been imposed by these measures will affect only the well-off and will not touch the poorer classes. Under the Agricultural Income-tax Act, petty landlords and the smaller cultivators have been left untouched, incomes below rupees five thousand having been exempted from the tax. The Bihar Stamp Amendment Act enhances the rate of stamp duty on certain instruments etc., so as to bring in an increased annual revenue. The Bihar Entertainments Duty Act empowers the levy of a tax on all payments received for admission to places of public entertainment. The Bihar Congress Government saw no reason why those who derived large or relatively large income from agriculture should not pay tax on those incomes or why those who spent money on entertainments should not contribute something towards the revenues of the State.

The Anti-Illiteracy Campaign in Bihar

According to the last census, the province of Bihar in far as literacy is concerned, stands lowest ... Recognising the seriousness of this menace, Dr Syed Mahmud, Minister of Education, started the mass literacy movement towards the end of April 1938. It is noteworthy that the Minister of Education has succeeded in inspiring thousands of our countrymen with the passion of doing this great nation-building work without which it could not have achieved the phenomenal success referred to below.

This Mass Literacy Committee recruited and trained thousands of honorary workers, printed special charts and primers for illiterate adults and organised literacy centers in every part of the province. Professors and teachers arranged lantern lectures on useful and interesting subjects to supplement the ordinary instruction imparted at these centers. Funds for contingent expenditure were collected by local subscriptions and, in some cases, grants were made by local bodies. The text of the primers and charts, which are in Hindustani, were printed in Nagri and Urdu scripts, the result being that in a large number of literacy centers, many Hindus and Muslims have learnt both these scripts.

Literacy work was organised in jails. Arrangements were made to make all police and chaukidars literate within six months or so. Industrial concerns were also persuaded to join the movement. While the main agency for instruction consists of the honorary labour of teachers, students, unemployed young men and social workers, provision was made for the payment of a small honorarium of five annas per adult male literate. Small grants-in-aid were also made to meet the cost of contingent expenditure. To ensure lasting literacy, a carefully graduated series of readers has been prepared and provision made for the publication of a fortnightly in Hindustani, printed in Nagri and Urdu scripts. It is expected that, if the intensity of the movement is maintained, it may be possible to banish illiteracy from Bihar in about 10 years. It has been stated that within four months of starting the campaign, over 3 lakhs of adults were made literate...

It was estimated in May 1939 that there were more than eleven thousand night schools for adults with an enrolment of nearly three lakhs. This is in addition to an equal number previously made literate. According to a recent communiqué, all the police constables in Bihar have been made literate, while out of 48,000 chaukidars, 22,000 have learnt to read and write.

Probably the most interesting features of the movement is that it has also spread in the jails. A literacy campaign was started in the Gaya Jail in July 1938, with the result that practically every illiterate prisoner has become literate while many of them have gone up to the fifth standard in one year. At the Bhagalpur Central Jail, about 6,200 male and female prisoners have learnt to read and write in the course of a single year.

The expansion of literacy among women is progressing steadily. The Bihar Council of Women has given a great impetus to the movement and has appealed to other womens organisations for help and cooperation.

The literacy campaign was begun at Jamshedpur by the Tata Iron and Steel Company in July 19, 1938. There are now about seventy centers here with an enrolment of nearly 3,600 adults of whom about 20 per cent are women. According to the general manager of this company, it is probable that at the present rate of progress Jamshedpur will be literate in about five years.

The campaign which was originally started on a purely voluntary basis, has now been placed on a permanent basis. Last year the Bihar Government gave a grant of Rs 80,000 but this year it has been increased to 2 lakhs.

As an educationist with more than 40 years experience of teaching work behind me, I offer my congratulations to the Bihar Congress Government for the ability with which the Ministers have organised this campaign, the ease with which they have secured the loyal cooperation of the

volunteer workers, the thoroughness with which they are doing the work and the success which has crowned their efforts. Bihar, the most backward of provinces in India so far as literacy is concerned, is now the acknowledged leader in this work in India in just the same way as Madras, notorious for its drunkenness, is the leader in the prohibition movement. All honour to those of our leaders who, undeterred by the serious difficulties which stood in their way, have boldly faced and successfully solved these two great problems....

After all this, dare even the worst enemy of the Indian National Congress suggest that it does not take any genuine interest in the welfare of the masses? Surely they must admit that this is the last charge that can justly be brought against the Congress Ministers.

Minister's Salaries

Of the acts falling under this group, those worth mentioning are the acts fixing the salaries of ministers, the officers and members of the legislatures. The salaries which the ministers, under the old constitution, used to draw was Rs 48,000 each per annum. Even under the new constitution of 1935 before the advent of the Congress government, the salary which the interim Premier used to draw was Rs 24,000 per year and the salary of each of the other interim ministers was Rs 18,000 per annum. Following their zeal of economy and national service the present members of the cabinet have voluntarily fixed for themselves a salary of only Rs 6,000 each per year. In this respect no distinction has been made between the Prime Minister and the other ministers. This compares very favourably with what we find today in the two non-Congress provinces of Bengal and Punjab. According to the monthly report published by the UP Government and known as 'Public Information', the amount spent out of the taxes for each minister of Bengal is Rs 37,508 per year while the amount spent every year for each minister of Punjab is Rs 45,755.

Similarly, the salaries of the Speaker of the Bihar Assembly and of the President of the Bihar Council have also been fixed at Rs 6,000 per year. In this connection we have to remember that the President of the old Legislative Council used to draw a salary of Rs 24,000 a year. In so far as the daily and traveling allowances of members of the legislatures are concerned, each of them used formerly to draw a daily allowance of Rs 10 and first-class traveling. By the Member's Salaries and Allowances Act (1938), each of the members of the legislatures has been given a salary of Rs 900 per year, second-class traveling allowance and a daily allowance of Rs 3 during the session of the legislatures. These measures alone are expected to effect a saving of thousands of rupees annually. It seems to me that this one fact alone is sufficient to prove the great concern felt for the masses by the Congress leaders who are willing to work on a basis of sacrifice in order to effect economies so that more money might be available for helping the poor people.

The Rational Outlook

What, one may well ask, is the reason why the Congress, which only the other day was a proscribed organisation, has achieved this wonderful success at the polls? The answer to this lies in the fact that though in the past the Indian National Congress was composed of the educated middle classes and of some of the more well-to-do-Indian businessmen, mill-owners, bankers, etc. it is no longer the exclusive body it was at one time. Under the influence and guidance of Mahatma Gandhi, it has succeeded in drawing within its ranks, agricultural and industrial labour as well as members of the lower middle classes. Nowhere is this seen on a larger scale than in the province of Bihar where kisan organisations play so important a part in shaping the policy of public administration.

It is quite true that before the Congress came into power, many of our poorer and less educated brethren imagined that they would have a new heaven and a new earth as soon as the work of administration was taken up by our national organisation. They quite naturally feel disappointed

because the high hopes they had entertained have not been fulfilled. I would ask them to consider the amount of progress achieved in India during the time that the administration of our motherland was in the hands of British Government, and then to pass their judgment on the work done by different Congress ministries. No fair-minded man will deny that the British Government has done much for us but, at the same time, we should not forget that the progress we see today was achieved during a period extending to nearly two centuries.

The Congress Governments, on the other hand, have been in power for a little over two years. All along they had been in the opposition and their only work had consisted in criticizing the doings, good, bad, indifferent, of our rulers. I question whether a single man among the present leaders had any experience of the work of administration. On coming into power they had, first of all, to familiarize themselves with the routine work of daily administration and to study each problem, many of them unfamiliar in all their bearings. It is true that they have been receiving the willing and loyal cooperation of the permanent staff which probably is the best possible proof of that sense of discipline which lies at the root of the success of the British as administrators in every sphere of life.

It is only recently that after mastering all these details, the ministers in the different Congress provinces have been initiating new legislation and adopting new policies. It should be noted that a majority of those measures aim at the benefit of the masses for, under the guidance of Mahatma Gandhi, all genuine Congressmen have realised that the improvement and prosperity of India ultimately depend on the educational, social and economic uplift of all her children and not on the well-being of only the rich and the educated among them. I admit that much remains to be done in this direction but, at the same time, I am constrained to point out that much has been done already within the two years or so that the Congress has been in power. We should all remember that the members of the different Congress cabinets are human beings with limited powers and not magicians who can do in the wink of an eye what an ordinary man takes months and years to accomplish. I contend that taking into account the difficulties which had to be overcome, the progress achieved within this short period is quite satisfactory and I would request every genuine lover of India of the cause of nationalism to trust them and to give them time in which to carry to a successful issue the task they have set for themselves. As it is, they have a sufficiently heavy burden to carry. It is not, therefore, wise to add to their difficulties by ungracious and very often unjust and bitter criticism, the only effect of which is to embarrass them and to curtail their usefulness as willing, cheerful and unselfish servants of our motherland and her children....

¹ Shankarlal Banker (b 1889), educated in Wilson College and St Xavier's College, Bombay; associated with the Home Rule movement after his return from London in 1915; around 1919-20, he became one of Gandhi's close followers, paid special attention to the promotion of the Mahatma's constructive programme, and worked tirelessly for the welfare of the depressed classes

² Jarnalal Bajaj (1889-1942) was cast in much the same mould as Shankarlal Banker, drawn into the Gandhian movement and accepting the Mahatma as his spiritual guide. There were many facets of his active public life—treasurer of the Congress for most of his life, founder of the Satyagraha Ashram at Wardha (with Acharya Vinoba Bhave); founder of the Gandhi Sewa Sangh; President of the Jaipur State Praja Mandal and organizer of a massive movement for democratic rights in the princely State of Jaipur. On his death, Mahatma wrote: 'Never was a Nation blessed with a 'son' like him... There is hardly any activity of mine in which I did not receive his full-hearted cooperation and in which it did not prove to be of the greatest value'. In his death the country lost 'a loyal servant, the Congress a stately pillar, and many institutions their true patron'.

³ Chittaranjan Das (1870-1927); son of a reputed solicitor of the Calcutta High Court; joined legal profession after his return to India in 1894; came into prominence as counsel for defence in the trial of Aurobindo Ghose; joined the Congress in 1906; came to the forefront of national politics in 1917 when invited to preside over the Bengal Provincial conference; member, non-official Jallianwala Bagh Enquiry Committee; allied with Gandhi, 1920, and became leader of non-cooperation in Bengal; President, Indian National Congress, 1922; organised the Swaraj Party with Motilal Nehru

and succeeded in having his policy of Council entry accepted by the Congress; elected to the Bengal legislative council, 1923; mayor, Calcutta corporation, 1924–25; chief architect of the 'Bengal Pact'.

⁴ Mohammad Umer Sobhani (d. 1926); an enterprising businessman of Bombay; active worker of the Indian National Congress; closely connected with the Home Rule League; took active part in the non-cooperation movement; Congress treasurer in 1921; contributed generously to the Khilafat Fund.

⁵ Mukhtar Ahmad Ansari (1880–1936); educated at Queen's College, Benaras, Muir Central College, Allahabad, Nizam's College, Hyderabad; BA, Madras, 1900; went to England in 1901 where he was the first Indian house surgeon in the Charing Cross Hospital, London; began his practice in Delhi in 1910; led the Indian Medical Mission to Turkey, 1912–13; received a special award from the Ottoman Consul-General in recognition of his services in Turkey, 1914; founded the Home Rule League at Delhi, 1917, and was elected its President; Chairman of the Reception Committee of the Muslim League, Delhi, 1918; played a leading part in the Khilafat movement; President, All-India Muslim League, Nagpur, 1920; President, All-India Khilafat Conference, Gaya, 1922, and opposed Council entry till mid-1923; Chairman, Reception Committee of the Special Congress at Delhi, September 1923; drafted a National Pact with Lajpat Rai for improving Hindu Muslim relations, 1923; President of the Congress in 1927; one of the founders of the All-India Muslim Nationalist Party, July 1929; member, Foreign Cloth Boycott Committee, 1929; opposed Gandhi's Civil disobedience movement in 1930, but said or did nothing against the Congress policy and programme 'because of my loyalty and my deep attachment to the Congress and to those who have got its reins in their hands'; President of the Congress Parliamentary Board, 1934.

⁶ Hakim Ajmal Khan (1863–1927); family came from Kashgar, Turkestan and held important positions under the Mughal emperor, Babur; produced a long line of physicians of which the most famous was Hakim Sharif Khan, Ajmal's grandfather; educated in the Islamic branches of learning and learnt medicine from his father, Haji Mahmud Khan and his brother; founder member of the All-India Muslim League; board of management of the nadwat al-ulama; chairman, reception committee, All-India Muslim League, 1920, trustee of Aligarh college; visited Europe 1911; became involved in active politics on his return; President, Muslim League, 1919; took part in the Khilafat agitation and was the first to renounce his title in April 1920; chancellor, Jamia Millia Islamia, November 1920; President, Indian National Congress and All-India Khilafat Conference, Ahmedabad, December 1921; member, Congress Civil disobedience enquiry committee and voted in favour of Council entry, joined the Swarajists, January 1923; retired from politics in 1925 because of ill-health. He was described by C.F. Andrews as 'quiet, humble, modest, with all the dignity of a man of character, learning and religious sincerity... As a 'moderate' leader, he had little in common with Mohammed Ali and his colleagues, though their differences never came to the fore except during the Khilafat movement when they disagreed over the conduct of the agitation. In the estimate of Hardinge, Ajmal was 'much respected generally throughout India, and as far as I know absolutely loyal in every way. I used to see him a good deal at Delhi and often talked to him of Muslim affairs, especially in connection with the war'.

⁷ The Governor received the Premier, Babu Srikrishna Sinha and his colleagues on 3 November and accepted the resignation of the cabinet.

94. Reforms in Bihar

AICC Papers, File No. G. 53, NMML. (This is an undated report on the performance of the Bihar Ministry.)

Enclosure: 1

Land Legislation

Rent in Bihar is paid either in cash or in kind. Cash rent is prevalent, in kind being paid largely in the districts of Patna, Gaya, and parts of the districts of Monghyr and Shahabad.

During the last 25 to 30 years there had been very considerable enhancement in cash rents. The Tenancy Acts that were passed have provided that all such enhancements since 1911 shall be cancelled and rent brought back to the level of 1911. There may be cases where rent may not be reduced under this provision, and to meet such cases these tenancy Acts provides, firstly, for reduction of rent in the same proportion in which there has been a fall in the price of staple food crops, and, secondly, for settlement of fair rent in suitable cases. Provision has also been made for the entire or partial remission of rent (a) in cases where the soil of a holding has deteriorated by deposit of sand or by submersion under water or by any other specific cause, whether sudden or

gradual and (b) in cases where the landlord has failed to maintain facilities for irrigation which he is bound to carry out.

Two methods of realizing rent in kind are generally prevalent. (a) By appraisement of the standing crop. This method has been abolished as it was open to grave abuses and the tenant almost invariably failed to get his legitimate share of the produce. (b) By dividing the crop. It has been customary to divide the crop half and half, but more often than not 22 seers in a maund have been taken by the landlord leaving only 18 to the tenant. This ratio has been reversed, and under the new law the landlord's share shall in no case exceed 18 seers in the maund and the tenant's shall not be less than 22, after allowance has been made for harvesting charges.

During the period when prices were high a very large number of rents in kind were commuted into cash rent. Naturally the rents fixed were high. Provision has, therefore, been made for reduction of such rents in the same proportion in which prices have gone down. And the right has been conferred upon the tenant to get his rent in kind commuted into cash rent if he so desires. If an application is made in this behalf by the tenant, the court has no option.

There has thus been reduction in rent both in cash and in kind. Commuted rents have also been reduced. The average reduction in rent works out to about 25 per cent, though in individual cases the reduction has been as high as 60 per cent. (The total rent in Bihar has been assessed at about 10 crores of rupees; upon this assumption the money saved to the agriculturist as a direct result of the tenancy legislation will amount to rupees two and a half crores per year.)

During the period of depression a large number of holdings were sold in execution of decrees for arrears of rent and were bought by landlords who were in possession of them as (what in technical language is known as) *bakasht* land. Under the Tenancy Acts all lands so sold since 1929 are liable to be restored except in cases where the land had already been settled in good faith with a third person before a specified date or where the landlord was a petty landlord and the land was in his own cultivating possession. The law provides for the restoration of the holding on payment, in easy instalments which may extend over a period of 5 years, of half the sum for which the lands were sold. Rent suits are generally fixed for 4 years' arrears of rent. Amount of damages usually allowed varied from 15 to 25 per cent. Assuming that the rent of a particular holding was Rs 25, the suit would be for recovery of Rs 100 as arrears of rent and Rs 15 as damages. Court fee and other costs decreed by the Court would be roughly Rs 25. The sale would thus be for recovery of Rs 140 out of which the landlord had to spend not less than Rs 30 from out of his pocket on the litigation. The tenant would be entitled under the new law to get back the land on payment of Rs 70 in five annual instalments of Rs 14 only. In other words all that the landlord gets as rent for 4 years in Rs 40 without interest. We must also remember that the tenant continued to be in possession of the land without payment of rent for the period that the rent and subsequent proceedings lasted which in no case could have taken less than 2 years.

In other cases of arrears of rent the law provides for reduction of rent with retrospective effect, in other words arrears will not be entitled to be recovered at a rate higher than the reduced rent. Reduction of arrears of rent may also be given by the Collector to such an extent as he considers proper.

There can be no ejectment for arrears of rent of an occupancy raiyat. He cannot be imprisoned in execution of a rent decree nor can his movable be ordinarily sold. His entire holding may not be sold in the first instance. Only such portion of it can be sold as is considered by the court to be of sufficient value to cover the amount due. The house of a tenant and other buildings with their sites and materials and land attached thereto have also been exempted from sale.

Removal of Mass Illiteracy

Bihar was the first province to tackle the important problem of the removal of illiteracy, this was an experiment that gave Bihar distinction, and a vigorous drive was inaugurated throughout the province against ignorance and illiteracy.... Valuable results were achieved, over 8 lakhs of people have been made literate out of whom 5 lakhs are doing post-literacy work, and about 3 lakhs are receiving instruction.

Sugarcane Industry

The question of legislation for the growth of the sugar industry on sound lines and for the protection of cane-growers was another important problem in which Bihar showed the way. The system of indiscriminate purchase of cane was not in the best interests of the grower. As compared to the miller the grower is in a very weak position not only because he is illiterate and unorganized but also on account of the fact that the commodity which he has to sell is perishable. The Bihar Sugar Factories Control Act was, therefore, passed which, among other measures to ensure the progress of the industry both in the interests of the grower and of the industry as a whole, empowered the Provincial Government to fix the minimum price on sugarcane required for use in factories. A similar Act on similar lines was also passed in the neighbouring United Provinces. It was necessary for the two adjoining provinces to act in complete harmony and cooperation because experience had shown that unless there was the same minimum price in both the provinces the factories of the bordering districts were quick to the other. The Act has been a great blessing to the agriculturist who has received as the fruit of this legislation a higher minimum price than he did in the past, and an additional sum of not less than 1½ crores of rupees is going into this pocket every year as a result of this increased price. The present year is an abnormal year, the minimum price is much higher than it has ever been before, and the additional sum which the raiyat is estimated to receive this year will go up to 2½ crores of rupees.

Debt Legislation

Under the Bihar Money Lenders' Act maximum rates of interest have been fixed at 9% pa in case of secured and 12% pa in case of unsecured debts, subject to the proviso that in no case shall the interest paid exceed the principal. Power has been given to the courts to re-open loan transactions and to give relief to debtors in respect of interest in excess of the prescribed rates. The Act also exempts a portion of the holding of an agricultural debtor from sale, the area exempted being one acre if the holding does not exceed three acres and more up to one-third of the entire holding if the holding consists of more than three acres.

Prohibition

A Prohibition Act was passed to implement the policy of prohibition of intoxicating drinks and drugs, even at the expense of the exercise revenue which constitutes the bulk of the revenues of the province, being Rs 1,05,00,000 out of a total of Rs 5,38,42,000. Prohibition was introduced in the district of Saran, in parts of the Ranchi and Hazaribagh districts and in the whole of the Hajipur sub-division in the Mazaffarpur district. The total loss of revenue amounted to about Rs 20 lakhs but sales fell by the sum of about Rs 42 lakhs which has remained in the pockets of the people in the areas concerned to spend on other items of necessary expenditure.

Irrigational Facilities

Allied with the tenancy and agrarian problem is the question of providing adequate irrigational facilities. Two Acts were passed with a view to improve the existing private and public irrigational works and to ensure their proper maintenance and repair.

The problem of irrigation is acute in South Bihar. The existing Son canal system operates within very narrow limits and the paucity of perennial streams makes its expansion to any considerable length impossible. Sub-soil sources of water have to be tackled, and it was therefore decided to introduce a widespread system of lift irrigation. This is only possible when electricity is made available at a cheap rate over the countryside, i.e. when the province is electrified. Electrification is thus calculated to solve the irrigational problem, assuring paddy crops to cultivators, enabling them to grow better rabi crop in irrigated fields, and also to raise money crops like sugarcane, potato etc. it will also stimulate industrial development by assuring supply of power at a cheap rate and will tend to aid cottage industries in regard to operations which are more suitable for mechanical power than for hand power, i.e. on lines on which developments have taken place in Japan or, coming nearer home, in Mysore fraught with immense possibilities, and though the scheme could not be actually put into effect all the preliminary work in connection with it had been concluded.

Miscellaneous

The Bihar and Orissa Public Safety Act was repealed.

All political prisoners were released.

Sec. 8 of the Bengal Troops Transport and Travellers Assistance Regulation of 1806 empowering police officers to impress labour and transport for civil officers and private travelers journeying in the mofussil was repealed.

Conditions governing grant of fun licenses were liberalized.

Liberal grants were made for development of hand-spinning and hand-weaving, and other village industries.

Large grant were made for flood relief and for ifrigation works.

A reduction of about Rs 2 lakhs was made in the canal rates.

Grievances of raiyats in the forest areas were removed.

A new orientation was given to the administration of wards and encumbered estates.

A scheme was put into effect to subsidize medical practitioners in rural areas.

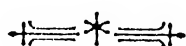
Reforms were introduced in the jail administration.

Those persons who were dismissed or discharged or who resigned for political reasons during the civil disobedience movement were reinstated.

Degrees, diplomas and certificates issued by the national educational institutions were recognised for purpose of appointment to Government service and for purpose of franchise.

A scheme of rural development was launched under which model centers of rural welfare work were opened with the object of concentrating efforts to improve village life in all its diverse aspects.

Special efforts were made and large sums of money were sanctioned for the educational advancement and economic improvement of the condition of the Harijans and the aboriginals.



95. (a) The Vidya Mandir Bill, CP Legislative Assembly, Nagpur

Hitavada, 3 November 1939

After interpellations Mr B.G. Khaparde continued his overnight speech on the Vidya Mandir Bill. He referred to clause 4 of the Bill regarding the constitution of the Vidya Mandir Managing Committee. His first comment on this was that it was not a compact body which could transact business. The members of the Committee, he said, would be diffused all over the district. Secondly he felt it was extremely unwise to allow the teacher to be a member of the Managing Committee. He had no doubt that the Committee would prove a failure.

Referring to the remarks of the Rev. Rogers, he said the member from the Anglo-Indian constituency had said that this scheme was a great scheme because it had been ridiculed. This, Mr Khaparde pointed out, was bad logic. The Rev. Rogers had also said that no alternative scheme had been put forward by the critics. This argument, he said, was vain. They were not putting forward any scheme. But for the satisfaction of the member he said there was a scheme which was tried and found suitable. The officer of the Education Department who was the author of that scheme did not approve of the Vidya Mandir Scheme and he was pushed out of the Secretariat (Cries of shame).

Plea for Common Schools

Continuing Mr Khaparde pleaded for common institutions both for Hindus and Muslims. Communal understanding would not come, he said, by dividing the two communities. All talk about Swaraj, all talk about Unity must stop if these schools were going to perpetuate the differences. If the Muslims wanted it, it was for the Government to change the name and they should do it to put the Hindu and Muslim boys together.

Mr K.P. Pande moved for closure. There were cries of protest from the Opposition. The Speaker asked how many members wanted to speak. Four members stood up.

Mr Gulam Hussain did not agree with the view that there should be common schools for Muslims and Hindus.

The question was then put and division claimed. Sixty went into the Ayes Lobby and twenty-three into the Noes Lobby. Mr Jakatdar did not vote. The motion was declared carried.

Amendments

Mr Hidayat Ali's amendment inserting the words 'Madine-tulilm' after the words Vidya Mandir in the preamble was accepted by Government. Government however did not accept a similar amendment proposed by Mr Hidayat Ali to be made in the short title of the Bill. Government also accepted the amendment of Mr Hidayat Ali suggesting the omission of the words 'Bait-ul-ilm' from the provisions of the Bill. Mr Kedar's amendment urging fixation of courses of study was ruled out as being beyond the scope of the Bill. Mr Kedar also sought through an amendment to delete the provision for grants but the proposal was opposed by the majority party.

Proposing his amendment Mr Kedar said that when the Scheme was conceived it was given out that it would be self-supporting scheme and there was no question of finance. Why then, he asked, had this provision been made? It appeared to him that the original plan of one teacher scheme had disappeared. If that was not so, why did not Government stick to its old plan and depend entirely on donations. If the Bill had nothing to do with finance there would be no difficulty on the part of Government to accept the amendment. Some members of the Legislature had acquiesced in the proposal because they were told that there would be no expenditure from public funds. If the scheme was a tomfoolery he did not see why it should be maintained.

Not Self-Supporting

Rao Sahib Rajurkar supporting Mr Kedar said that the Scheme was not self-supporting. It was found that the holdings were not productive enough and therefore these clauses had been inserted to draw from public revenues.

The motion was defeated.

Appeal To Governor

The Bill was then put clause by clause. Mr Gokhale moved that the Bill be passed into law. K.S.A.R. Khan opposing the motion complained that nothing had been done to help the scheme of the Muslims. He appealed to the Governor to use his special responsibilities in favour of the Muslims and withhold assent to the Bill.

The motion was put to vote and declared carried 62 voting for and 19 against. Mr Jakatdar again remained neutral.

(b) Further on Vidya Mandir Bill, CP Legislative Assembly, Nagpur

Hitavada, 3 November 1939

The Vidya Mandir Bill

The Hon. Mr S.V. Gokhale presented the report of the Select Committee on the Vidya Mandir Bill and moved that it be taken into consideration. He pointed out that the Bill had not undergone any material change in the Select Committee.

Point of Order

Mr T.J. Kedar raising a point of order urged that the Assembly was not competent to consider the Bill. He drew attention to Section 7 of the Bill and pointed out that under that section 'There shall be a Vidya Mandir fund which shall vest in the managing committee and 'among other moneys' grants in-aid by Government' shall be placed to the credit of the Vidya Mandir Committee. Mr Kedar said that since the Bill contemplated an expenditure from the revenues of the province it required the consent and recommendation of the Governor behind it or as laid down in Section 82(3) of the Government of India Act. The language of the section, Mr Kedar emphasized, was emphatic and free from ambiguity.

The Speaker: Is there no difference between making a grant and spending a grant.

Mr Kedar: It is a distinction without a difference.

The Hon. Mr D.K. Mehta pointed out that by this law Government would not be involved in an expenditure contemplated under Section 82(3) of the India Act.

Ruled Out

The Hon. Speaker held that this legislation did not make it compulsory on Government to make a grant but only enabled the Vidya Mandir to receive a grant. He also pointed out that word Governor in Section 82 of the India Act did not mean his Excellency the Governor but the Government as held by Sir Sitaram in the UP Council. He therefore ruled the motion out of order.

Dilatory Motion

The point of order having been ruled out Mr Kedar made another motion that the Bill be circulated for eliciting public opinion. He drew attention of the chair to Rule 79 of the Assembly rules and said he proposed to discuss the provisions of the Bill in the light of the Select Committee report.

A Tomfoolery

The Minister for Law, he said, had said that he (Mr Kedar) did not have any love for the Scheme. The Minister was not far wrong. The scheme, he said, was a tomfoolery (Hear, hear from Opposition benches). The Bill as amended contained two parts—the first relating to the Vidya Mandirs and the second to Bait-ul-ilm or Maidin-ul-ilm. Apart from these two parts he found a reference to the objects of Vidya Mandirs. He was unable to find what those objects were. The only object was in the meaning of the term Vidya Mandir viz. 'spread of literacy'. But Mr Kedar pointed out the courses of study were absent and asked what were the children going to do in these Vidya Mandirs; what was going to be the standard of education or efficiency of training. For what he asked were people going to give donations. The whole thing had been kept delightfully vague. And if Pt Shukla was not in office the Education Department would have to run to Raipur every now and then to ask what are the objects of Vidya Mandirs. The House was not in a position to know what was going to be done.

Mr Kedar was very much pained to criticize Bill coming as it did from Pt. Shukla. He had very high regard for him if not for anybody else (laughter).

Out of Tune Time

Concluding Mr Kedar said that if education was to be given it has to be in continuance with the time spirit. They did not want this banyan tree education. The ideal of Indian youths or yore was learning to front and bow and quiver of arrows behind. This scheme held out the ideal of takli in front and a pool of cotton on the back. This he said was wasting the nation's energy.

Rajurkar's Support

Rao Sahib Rajurkar, Leader of the Opposition supported the representative-circulation motion. He failed to see how the Vidya Mandirs were going to yield a net profit of Rs 200 each. If that was the belief of Government where was the need for making this provision of Government grant. This provision clearly indicated that Pandit Shukla had realized that the holdings were not productive.

Not the Way

Mr Rajurkar was of the opinion that this scheme would clog the spread of literacy and there would be chaos in the Education Department. He further expressed the opinion that the Bill had not been considered from the point of view of success. If Government really wanted liquidation of illiteracy this was not the way. They must restore the grants to local bodies. This was only waste of money. The success of the scheme was in the air—it was only a dream. No officer believed that the scheme would succeed but to maintain their jobs they had to dance to the tune of people in power.

A Party Propaganda

Continuing Rao Sahib Rajurkar said that tokli and charka were not the real motto to be placed before the Indian youth. Government must prepare India for its own defence. This scheme was not likely to create that martial spirit. Government had failed to understand the real problem. Time had come when Government should make it a point to give military education to every man. This scheme was nothing but party propaganda.

Prime Minister's Reply

The Hon. Pandit Ravi Shankar Shukla replying said that when the Bill had been referred to a select committee he did not think the speeches would be repeated today. The Muslim had accepted the principles of the Bill. Even very high officials including the Education Commissioner to the

Government of India had approved the scheme. To understand the scheme it was necessary to visit villages. It was in the spirit of service that a Vidya Mandir teacher could take up his post. The question of salary was nothing to him. He also pointed out that there was no direct connection between the Vidya Mandir and the syllabus to be followed. That had been left to the Education Department and was likely to undergo changes with conditions prevailing. He appealed to the House to accept the motion for consideration.

Khaparde's Suggestion

Mr Khaparde suggested that the two motions, viz, the motion for representative-circulation and that for consideration be taken separately. The Opposition members joined Mr Khaparde in making the request.

The Hon. Speaker said that since the members insisted he could not but allow the two motions to be discussed separately. In asking the House to discuss them together he only wanted to save time.

Ifbukhar Ali's Complaint

Mr Ifbukhar Ali complained that important measures were being rushed through. It was, he said, not correct to say that all officials agreed that the scheme would be a success. From his talks with certain officers of the department he had come to learn their opinion was that the scheme was doomed to failure.

Continuing Mr Ifbukhar Ali said that if they circulated the Bill now they would get the correct estimate of opinion since the scheme has been in existence for about two years.

Not True

Mr Ifbukhar Ali added that the Prime Minister had stated that the Muslims had accepted the principles of the Bill. This was far from true. When the time came the Muslims would show what they felt about the scheme. He emphasized that the Ministry had done nothing to promote literacy. He entirely agreed with the views expressed by Mr Kedar.

A.R. Khan's Challenge

Khan Sahib Abdur Rehman Khan supporting Mr Kedar's motion said that the Muslims were opposed to the scheme from Alpha to Omega. The name chosen was such that it put an obstacle in the way of creating a united, solid society. If the Muslims had agreed to the scheme it was done because they were given Hobson's choice. They had accepted it under threat. He challenged the Government to place the Scheme before any Muslim educational organisation and if even one lent its support to it the Muslims of this province would accept it in toto.

Roy. Rogers

The Roy. Mr Rogers did not know what objection the Muslims had to the Scheme. As an educational man he was entirely opposed to the Scheme because he believed that there was no short cuts in educational matters. But he had found nothing against the scheme. One of the fundamental conditions of success was the enthusiasm of the founder and he hoped with the zeal the Prime Minister was showing the scheme would prove a great success.

What the Bill Proposes

The Hon. Mr S.V. Gokhale saw no arguments which necessitated the circulation. He, therefore, opposed the dilatory motion. He pointed out that the Bill proposed to give legal status to the Vidya Mandir Committees and it had nothing to do with syllabus or curriculum.

Motion Defeated

The circulation motion was put and the House divided 23 voted for the motion and 58 against. The motion was declared lost.

Page's Attack

Discussion on the original motion was then resumed, Mr G.S. Page catching the Speaker's eye. Six lakhs, said Mr Page had been spent on the scheme. A tax payer was being flooded for the fad of the Prime Minister. From the point of view of expenses the scheme deserved to be scrapped. No pupils attended the school. The land given were fellow. In his opinion it was a scheme meant to provide for the kith and kin of....

The Speaker: I can't allow that (Withdraw, withdraw from Congress benches).

Rao Sahib Rajurkar rose to oppose the motion when the House adjourned for tea.

After Tea

Resuming after tea, Rao Sahib Rajurkar urged that this was a wasteful expenditure and the House should not sanction it.

Shareef's Opposition

Mr M.Y. Shareef opposed the motion. He said the Leader of the Opposition had cast some aspersion on Government servants.

Rao Sahib Rajurkar: I have not doubted their honesty, I have only depicted their difficulty.

Mr Shareef said that his opposition was for quite a different reason. He was not opposed to the name of Vidya Mandir. But he felt that the Scheme was detrimental to the country. It would prevent the country from being united and so take India away from the goal of swaraj. It was a charge against the Montague scheme that Government were doing all in their power to keep different communities away one from another and they had cried hoarse over it. It was for them now to see if the money they were spending for schools, contemplated under the scheme would land to create unity among the Hindus and Muslims and Christians.

Work for Unity

Mr Shareef appealed to the House not to spoil the future generation and to work for the unity without which Swaraj was not attainable. They had therefore to see if the Scheme would give that unity.

An Admission

Referring to clause 11 of the Bill he pointed out that the Bill contemplated separate institutions for Muslims and Hindus. This clause was an admission on the part of the member in charge that there was no room for Muslim boys in the Vidya Mandir and for Hindu boys in the Bait-ul-Ilm or Madina-ul-Ilm. This was an admission that they wanted to keep the two boys divided from one another.... Mr Shareef could have understood if the sponsor of the Bill had stuck to his original name Vidya Mandir. They had wasted two years and more and the present crisis had given an

opportunity to the Congress to redeem its position. If they had not gone on, on party considerations and taken the minorities into confidence Lord Zeeland would not have made the speech he made (hear, hear from Opposition benches).

Mr H.J. Khandekar: Is the hon. Member speaking with full knowledge of consequences of a disciplinary action?

Mr Shareef: I have not the least fear for that I do not think they are quite so devoid of reason. When I speak in the interest of the organisation. I think that a certain action is detrimental to the country I will not flinch to speak out my mind.

Mentality of Ministry

'Our penance is not over but we are done out. The time has not gone out but we are going out' This said Mr Khaparde, quoting a Sanskrit verse was the mentality of the Ministry. That being so they wanted to achieve whatever they could within the short time at their disposal. A word had been whispered to him that it was no use making long speeches. The Ministry was to resign on a particular day and if that was not made possible it would be a great calamity.

Continuing Mr Khaparde said that he had started with a bias in favour of an experiment but what was being done was that the experiment was being taken as a fact for granted? The scheme was being extended to the whole province. If failure came it would be a great disaster. He also emphasized that it was not correct to say that no manner of teaching was contemplated under the scheme. What were the teachers taught if not a particular kind of teaching meant for the Vidya Mandirs.

Khan Bahadur, Mirza Rahman Beg rose at 5 and said it was their Ramzan and the House should be adjourned.

Mr Shareef: The Namaz time is 6.

The Speaker said he did not want to have any discussion on the subject. He had intended to call the leaders and decide it. To-day they might sit till 5.30.

Mr Ifukhar Ali suggested that they should sit till 5.15.

The House agreed.

Continuing Mr Khaparde said that the teacher was expected to work on Rs 15 throughout his life. If he got married and had one, two, three or fifteen children still he was expected to get Rs 15 eternally. This only showed the type of man that would be coming forward for the post. Then he said there was the possibility of the land not yielding sufficient crop. In that case the teacher would have either to starve or leave the job. There was the third possibility that if the teacher fell out with the Committee what would happen. The teaching would be hindered-nay, there would be no teaching and the pupils instead of learning their lessons would be picking weeds in the field.

96. Resignation of Congress Ministry in Bihar

Circular dated 4 November 1939 issued by R.E. Russell,¹ Chief Secretary to Government, File No. 181/11/39, NAI

4 November 1939

The Congress Ministry has resigned office and, as the Governor has been unable to form an alternative Government under the constitution, he has found it necessary under section 93 of the Government of India Act to issue a Proclamation declaring that all the function of the Government shall be exercised by him, and assuming to himself all the powers vested in or exercisable by the Bihar Legislature.

2. However, while the attitude of the official Congress Party may develop after withdrawing from participation in the Government of the province, it is probable that the left-wing groups will quickly pass into active opposition to Government accompanied by anti-war propaganda, agrarian and labour agitation and possibly sabotage and violence. While the attitude of the main body of Congress is at present uncertain, it is possible that it also may sooner or later pass from mere non-participation in Government and the conduct of the war to more active opposition. The resulting situation may require action of varying severity to secure the maintenance of order, uninterrupted administration and of effective conduct of the War.

3. It is important therefore to define at the beginning of this emergency the attitude that Government and its officers should take towards the Congress and other parties which may be in opposition to the Government, and to ensure that the conduct of all servants of Government is regulated in accordance with that attitude.

4. In the first place, it is necessary to bear in mind that this is only a temporary interruption in the orderly development of democratic Government in India to which Great Britain and India are committed. The Governor hopes that it may be of a short duration. In any case, when the crisis is past or the War is ended, constitutional Government will doubtless once more resume its normal progress. It is, therefore, of great importance that no avoidable hostility or bitterness should be engendered during the period of emergency administration.

5. It may become necessary for Government or its officers from time to time to take drastic action, to use all the powers that general emergency legislation provides for dealing with the situations that may arise, and to arrest and punish those whose opposition to Government may offend the law and, if necessary demands it, those powers will have to be used without respect of person or party. Where action has to be taken, it must be done in an open, impartial and just manner in order that opposition parties and the public may realise and appreciate that, while circumstances compel the Government to use the powers at their disposal to maintain order and secure the effective prosecution of the War, they are not exploiting the situation in any vindictive or opportunistic spirit. It is essential therefore that all officers, particularly those charged with the maintenance of law and order, should themselves observe and should enforce upon their subordinates, strict discipline and restraint. The present emergency may put a strain on their forbearance and capacity to refrain from retaliation, but they should be careful not to lend colour by their conduct to accusations of oppression or victimization.

6. While thus counselling all his officers to moderation and restraint His Excellency does not wish to give the impression that there should be any hesitation or compromise in taking immediate and firm action where it is needed. Such action as the situation requires must be taken, subject to such sanction as the law or Government instructions may require. If law and order is endangered or attempts are made to interfere with the administration or with the orderly life and vocations of the community, the prime necessity is to maintain law and order and the unimpaired functioning of the administration, and all measures required for that end will have to be taken without fear or favour.

7. His Excellency relies on all his officers to maintain at this difficult time the high standards that have been set for their respective services, and has no doubt that their response to the emergency will justify his confidence.

8. At the moment of writing, conversation are in progress between the Viceroy and the leaders of the Congress and other parties. It is important that nothing should be done which would be likely to impede the successful issue of these efforts. Until these negotiations have been concluded,

therefore all officers should exercise great caution and should refrain from any drastic action unless the maintenance of law and order demands it.

¹ Robert Edwin Russell (1890–1972); educated at Campbell College, Belfast; Trinity College, Dublin; entered ICS in 1912; military service, 1915–19; district magistrate and collector in Bihar from 1920 to 1938; secretary to the revenue Department, (1927–31) and chief secretary (1934–35, 1938–39); advisor to the governor of Bihar from 1939 to 1945.

97. Kashi celebrates the resignation of Congress Ministries

Aaj (Hindi Daily, Banaras), 7 November 1939

[Extract]

Kashi

5 November 1939

Kashi, Monday Following the instructions of the Provincial Congress Committee, the Congress Committee organised a huge procession from Dashashvamedha Ghat last evening to facilitate the Congress ministers for tendering their resignations. The procession was transformed into a meeting on reaching the Town Hall.

The procession was a long one. It was led by Shri Sampurnanandji, the City Congress Committee President, Shri Mahavir Singh and other well-known Congress office-bearers and Shri Krishna Chandra Sharma. They were followed by Congress workers from all the eight wards of the city singing patriotic songs, shouting slogans and waving the national flag. Then came various peasants mounted on bullock carts depicting how talks were held between the government officials and the country's prominent leaders at the outbreak of war and what led to the resignation of the Congress ministries. The masses marched alongside the bullock carts. The procession passed through Godoliya Chowk and Maidagiri and reached the Town Hall where a meeting was held. All along the route, shopkeepers had decorated their shops and streets with banners and flags. These shopkeepers greeted Shri Sampurnanandji with garlands. Some of them had even arranged for illumination....

98. Whither is the Government Bound?

Sangharsh (Hindi Weekly), 5 November 1939

5 November 1939

[Extract]

... The Congress has taken a step forward by resigning from their ministries. The imperialist government was ruling from behind the scenes. Now, they stand exposed before the people. The resignation of the ministries was imminent. The Congress has declared in its resolution on national demand at the Tripuri Congress that, under the so-called provincial autonomy, the scope for the people's welfare had come to an end. The Congress had not accepted the ministries in the hope of governing; it has made clear at the outset that it was accepting power only with the goal of abrogating the Constitution. There could not have been a better opportunity for the ministers to resign. Their resignation will make the Indian people aware of the true nature of the Government of India Act of 1935, drawn up by British political scientists.

What is going to happen now? It is clear that the Congress, having resigned from the ministries, cannot sit back. The resignation marks the first step in the battle for freedom. We now await

instructions from the Congress Working Committee. But the future is clear. The nation will now have to renew its great struggle, a greater struggle than the one we witnessed after the Great War in 1921, 1930 and 1932. The country will have to stand a greater test than ever before. It will have to face the imperialists once more; there will be more arrests, sentences and confiscations. Once more we shall have to pay the price for freedom, many more sacrifices at the altar of freedom. But the struggle for independence is one in which there can be no defeat. Even if we do not emerge victorious this time it is quite certain that our sacrifices will only strengthen our determination towards freedom and independence. This is the lesson we learn from the history of freedom struggle all around the world....

99. The Resignation of the Congress Ministries

Nehru's Speech at Allahabad, *SWJN*, Vol. 10, pp. 228-29

7 November 1939

The original statement of the Congress Working Committee, which invited the British Government to state their war aims, has been appreciated all over the world because similar question are in the minds of the people of other countries also. The reply which the Congress has received to its questions is worthless and it shows that the British Government is going on its old ways. The Congress has given a reply and thereafter the Congress ministries have resigned and other serious steps are to follow; what they will be it is difficult to say. The talks that have been going on are closed, but at the same time talks from the other side continue. From the Congress side there is no particular desire to close the door for further negotiation, while we are proceeding with other things. The Congress tongue has always been mild. The Congress is prepared to meet everybody but with mildness. There is also iron determination, for only strong men can be calm. It has been the policy of the Congress during the last twenty years to keep the door of negotiations for settlement always open. We have given the last opportunity for settlement, but if necessary we will have to revive the struggle. The British Government knows well that whatever the Congress is doing is not paltry and that there are great ideas behind it and one good thing done is the resignation of the ministries. The resignation of the ministries at the present juncture is a great proof of non-cooperation, the results of which will be grave and varied. Having taken that step, it is difficult to check it until the British Government changes its policy or different things happen in India. When the Congress Working Committee asked the question about war aims, we did not expect anything from Mr Chamberlain, under whom no country can have any freedom, not even his own country. The right answer to the questions of the Congress Working Committee would have meant a change in the methods of the British Government and the end of imperialism. I do not find any difference between the 1914 and the present day imperialisms.

Be prepared for all eventualities. It is very necessary to maintain rigorous discipline in the Congress ranks. It is in the interest of discipline that the Congress Working Committee has stressed that no individual or group should start civil disobedience.

Mahatma Gandhi is always available for advice and guidance although he is not a four-anna member of the Congress. He has been taking very great interest in the Congress activities since the present crisis and his writings¹ show that he is prepared to take up even the leadership of the struggle to be revived. That is a matter for great pleasure because a struggle under Mahatma Gandhi's leadership will be very powerful. But the condition precedent to his acceptance of the leadership will be rigid adherence by the Congressmen to his method and principles. Congressmen must follow faithfully the method of non-violence for any step to the contrary by any group or party will be harmful to the satyagraha movement.

Poland had a large army; yet it was destroyed in two or three weeks,² without even its army getting a chance to fight. I cannot say that if Poland had adopted the weapon of satyagraha it would have been saved; but I am sure if it had done so, instead of spending billions on the army and aeroplanes, it would not have been reduced to the present state of ruin. The same can be said of Czechoslovakia and other countries, destroyed despite their great armies.³ Anybody who thinks of blowing up a few bridges or cutting telegraph wires is mistaken in thinking that he can do anything. Hence if not on the grounds of principle, on the mere grounds of expediency it is necessary that we should follow the method of non-violence. Anything, even shouting of slogans, which attempts to create a sense of violence is to be deprecated.

¹ In the 'Next Step', dated 4 November 1939, Mahatma Gandhi had written: 'I have never felt the weight of responsibility as heavily as I do today in connection with the present impasse with the British Government. The Working Committee alone have the right to declare and regulate civil disobedience. I have undertaken to guide the Working Committee.'

² Germany invaded Poland on 1 September 1939. Russia invaded Poland on 17 September.

³ Hitler occupied Bohemia and Moravia, parts of Czechoslovakia, on 14 March 1939 and established a protectorate two days later.

100. In the Aftermath of resignation: Viceroy to Haig, 13 November 1939

Haig Papers, Acc. No. 2068, NAI

*The Viceroy's House
New Delhi*

[Extract]

My dear Haig,

Thank you, too, for the most interesting account given in your letter of the situation arising out of the resignation of your Ministries. I am very glad that the parting should have been so friendly, though indeed they have every reason to be grateful to you for much forbearance over the period during which they have been in office. The atmosphere has been quite good in other provinces and that is perhaps a hopeful omen for the future. I have no doubt whatever that it has been with real regret, in almost every province, that Ministries have relinquished the responsibilities and the opportunities given them by provincial autonomy.

3. Two or three Governors also have had much the same experience as yourself in regard to last minute efforts to rush through decisions, particularly on highly controversial service points. I can well understand the delicacy of the situation which confronted you in relation to the Khaksars, who, now that the Congress Ministry has failed, have, I gather, ceased their activities entirely or almost entirely. I had a long account of the position in regard to this question from Sir Zia Uddin Ahmad a couple of days ago, and Mr Justice Sulaiman¹ of the Federal Court also tells me that he found himself in close contact with Alama Mashriqi and other leaders of the Khaksars when there was trouble in Aligarh recently in connection with precautions that had to be taken to safeguard the University. He suggested to me that the movement was one that was anti-communist and could, in his judgment, easily be made strongly pro-British. But I confess that I should be greatly relieved, as I regard it myself as having quite dangerous potentialities, to be free of it.

4. It would have been too much to hope that these conversations which I have been having with Gandhi and Jinnah and which culminated in the correspondence recently published would have cleared up the situation. But I am quite satisfied that they were worthwhile and that they

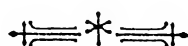
have been of value not only abroad but here, as showing our anxiety to see a reasonable accommodation and a reasonable resolution of the differences that have arisen. I cannot help feeling that Congress have made the greatest mistake in pinning themselves so firmly as they have to the demand for freedom or independence as great as anything one could hope for in the world today and one has only to look at the situation that arose in South Africa over the entry of South Africans into the war, or at the fact that the Irish Free State is at the moment neutral, to have immediate proof of that. Nor do I see (though we both know how quickly that type of situation changes) any disposition on the part of Muslims to accept the Hindu thesis, that the essential thing is the declaration of independence, and that the settlement of the difficulties of the minorities can be left to follow. On the contrary, Jinnah's demand last week for a decision in favour of equality for the Muslims is, I think, of very definite significance. I am given to understand that the suggestion has been made by at least one important member of the Muslim League that the demand represents a requirement that the Muslims shall have a veto on any legislation, and not merely legislation affecting Muslims in any legislature irrespective of the number of Muslim members. In other words, the Muslim demand is hardening and as Jinnah has emerged from these latest discussions not without credit, much modification of the Muslim attitude seems unlikely.

5. I do not propose to make any immediate move. I think it much better to let the dust settle, and incidentally to give Congress a little more time to think over the situation. They are coming under a certain amount of fire and see that there have been criticisms both from the Mahasabha and the National Liberal Federation, while the front page of this week's issue of 'Roy's Weekly' roundly criticizes them for their handling of the position. One cannot attach any value to these straws in the wind, for none of the critics would stand up to the Congress if it came to a show down, but they are not without their significance. I think that we can claim to have done our best, but there is a very obvious limit to the lengths to which we can go with Congress, particularly as we are bound to take account of the position and the legitimate claims of the minorities, and I cannot help feeling that it is about time that some constructive suggestion came from the Congress side. Hitherto all the moves have been made by us.

6. I shall much welcome it if during the operation of Section 93 you could help me by letting me have reports about developments and tendencies in your province as full as those which you have been good enough to let me have in the past, for even though the problem of administration will not be the same and though certain problems arising out of the existence of Ministers will have disappeared, it remains of the utmost importance, both for Zetland and myself, that we should keep in the closest touch with provincial happenings and with your mind as regards the general trend of political movement.

7. I do hope that you will soon be fit again and that things will continue to go smoothly in the United Provinces. I wholly agree with the line taken in the secret and personal letter to District Magistrates of which you have been kind enough to send me a copy and have little doubt that so far as Gandhi is concerned he is most anxious to avoid civil disobedience. He strongly impressed that fact upon me in our parang conversation and I am told that he sent Jawaharlal a strongly worded letter in the same sense from Delhi railway station on the day on which he left here.

¹ Shah Mohammad Sulaiman (b. 1886); educated at Allahabad and Cambridge; joined the Allahabad High Court in 1912; Acting Judge in 1920; vice-chancellor of the Aligarh Muslim University (1929-30); appointed Chief Justice in 1932 and Judge of the Federal Court in October 1937.



101. Resignation of the Assam Ministry and its Aftermath:

G.N. Bardoloi to A.K. Azad, 15 November 1939

AICC Papers, File No. P-4, 1939-40, NMML

Shillong

15 November 1939

My dear Maulana Saheb,

After we had had telephonic conversations with you and after plenty of heated discussions, we managed to adopt unanimously a resolution, copy of which is enclosed herewith for your perusal.

After the resolution was passed, the Congress members of the Party withdrew from the meeting and the non-Congress members proceeded to discuss the possibilities of an alternative Ministry pledged to execute the Congress Programme.

I am sure, from the trend of discussion with Rev. Nichols Roy¹ on the phone you could well understand the mentality of a fair number of the coalitionists. I am afraid, out of a body of 23 men at least 10 to 12, including the tribal group consisting of six members, are against what they call creating a deadlock. I tried to convince them that the withdrawal of cooperation from the ministry was purely a moral issue which every Indian should join, but they seemed inexorable.

After plenty of discussions they adopted a resolution among themselves, copy of which is also sent herewith. They tried to appoint a leader at the same sitting but it was only today that they succeeded in electing Rev. Nichols Roy as leader and Mr Ali Haider Khan as President of the party.

In the meanwhile, Rev. Nichols Roy saw the Governor who, seems, encouraged him with the idea of some kind of alternative Government.

At this evening's sitting they decided to write me the letter which I enclose herewith. I told them that if I were to give a reply, it would be possible for me to do so only after consulting the Working Committee. I further told them that I could give my personal opinion but that could never be taken as the opinion of either the Congress party or the Working Committee. I am waiting your advice on the matter. I have already given my opinion in a previous letter to you. I hope you will kindly discuss the subject at the next meeting of the Working Committee and communicate your opinion to me early.

We submitted our resignation at 3 o'clock this afternoon. I had about 15 minutes' talk with the Governor, in the course of which I told him that I expected that Assam would be treated like the seven Congress provinces and that since we command majority in the Assembly, the only honourable course would be to apply Section 93 and suspend the constitution. The Governor said that in view of the special circumstances of the province, he could not do so straightway but must give the leader of the Opposition an opportunity to form an alternative Ministry. He did not accept our resignation and asked for 4 to 5 days' time.

The Governor called Sir Md Saadullah at 6.30 this evening. To the pressmen Sir Saadullah said that he had an informal discussion with the Governor and that if he was formally asked to form a Ministry tomorrow he would take time. As far as I can see, nothing is going to happen during the next 4 to 5 days.

We seem to have today a majority of 58 members including the Speaker. Since there is the hope of an alternative Ministry with the Congress programme, other members (non-Congress) of the coalition also show a definite disposition not to go to Saadulla's side. It seems that if this attitude is real, the Congress constructive programme has at any rate caught their imagination. I feel some degree of selfishness is also there.

Enclosure-1

The following resolution was unanimously passed at a meeting of the Congress Coalition party in the Assam Legislature held on 14 November 1939;

‘Having considered the situation leading to the resignation of Ministries in seven provinces and the resolution of the Assam Cabinet relating to resignation, this meeting of the Congress Coalition Party in the Assam legislature do hereby resolve that the Ministry in Assam should resign forthwith in conformity with the directions of the Congress Working Committee’.

Enclosure-2

Resolution passed at a meeting of the non-Congress members of the Congress Coalition Party in the Assam Legislature:

‘As the Assam Ministry of the Congress Coalition Party headed by the Congress Premier have to resign from Congress party in the Assembly are willing and have promised to support the non-Congress members of the Assam Coalition Party if their leader mentioned hereinbelow is called by HE the Governor to form the Ministry, provided that the constructive programme of the Congress be carried out in the Legislature by that Ministry.

And as were also the following non-Congress members thereof are willing to work the Congress programme for constructive work in the Province.

And as we feel convinced also, that the Ministry formed by the members of this party with the support of the Congress members therein, will be stable, being the majority party in the Assembly, and therefore no other group will be able to form the ministry.

Be it resolved that we remain united as the Assam Coalition Party under the leadership of Rev. J.J.M. Nichols-Roy and the Presidentship of the Hon. Mr Ali Haider Khan’.

¹ Nichols-Roy, James Joy Mohan (Rev.) (1884-1959), educated at Scottish Church College, became the founder leader of the Church of God in the United Khasi-Jaintia Hills, member, Assam legislative council from 1921-59; joined the Congress in 1926; leader of the Assam Progressive Nationalist Party in the Assam legislative Assembly, 1937; deputy-leader of Assam Congress Parliamentary Party; headed the Assam Opium Enquiry Committee in 1934

102. The Congress in Bihar: Thomas Stewart¹ to Linlithgow, 15 November 1939

Linlithgow Collection, Acc. No. 2187, NAI

This letter brings upto date my periodical review of the situation in Bihar. Here, as elsewhere, the aftermath of the ‘break’ with Congress, has, so far belied our fears and apprehensions. There have been no pronouncements by the ex-ministers except a brief newspaper interview by the Prime Minister who confined himself to an expression of his relief on being rid of the cares of office. The rank and file, in accordance with the advice of Rajen Babu, have been scrupulous in following their leaders’ example. This was perhaps only to be expected in the opening stages of the campaign but I had apprehended that the leftists would not be so accommodating. With one exception, however, the extremists have been lying very low. They may be waiting for the Right to pick the first chestnut out of the fire but in any case the Kisan leaders are completely unanimous in their desire to keep out of prison. Such information as we get suggests that they are not satisfied that at the present moment a militant kisan movement has any chance of success. Should Congress come out against us the situation would, I except, materially change.

2. The exception to which I have referred is Jayaprakash Narayan,² the Congress Socialist Party leader in Bihar. Some of his speeches before the resignation of the Ministry were most

offensive but I have decided that I shall not take action on anything which happened before the resignation. My reasons are two: in the first place. I do not think that much damage was done and, secondly, I do not wish to suggest that in my view the Ministers had failed in their duty and I have been obliged to correct their mistakes. We are however watching Jayaprakash Narayan very closely and should he overstep the mark action will have to be taken. I should not proceed against him however unless there is a cast-iron case. He is a big figure in Bihar and carries a good deal of weight even with the conservative elements in Congress and we cannot afford to risk a failure and the resultant accusation of vexatious and vindictive prosecution.

¹ Thomas Alexander Stewart (b. 1888); educated at Edinburgh; Edinburgh University; entered ICS in 1911; served in UP 1912-18; collector of customs in Rangoon (1923), Madras (1925) and Bombay (1928); additional secretary in commerce department (1934); member of viceroy's executive council, 1937, acting governor of Bihar in 1938 and its governor from 1939 to 1943.

² Jayaprakash Narayan (1902-1978) was born in Saran District in a family connected with the government in the police and revenue departments. Unlike many of his contemporaries who studied in England, he spent eight years in the Universities of Iowa, Chicago, Wisconsin and California. Here he was imbued with socialist ideas and developed close links with M N Roy and a number of leading comrades. He returned to India in 1929 and, in 1936, organized the All India Congress Socialist party along with Achyut Patwardhan, Minoo Masani and Acharya Narendra Dev. He was active in the labour and kisan movements in Bihar and was held in high estimation by his detractors as well. He retired from public life after independence and interested himself in the Bhoodan movement. During the 1975-77 emergency years, Jayaprakash was a rallying symbol of the forces arrayed against the Congress.

103. Assam Government's Record of Work

Tribune, 16 November 1939

16 November 1939

Gopinath Bardoloi, who tendered resignation of the Assam Ministry this afternoon, issued the following statement through the Associated Presses after the resignation: 'I am happy to announce with great satisfaction that we have been able to follow in the footsteps of the Congress Provinces in carrying out the direction of the Working Committee in reference to resignations of Ministers'.

'Like my friend the ex-Premier of Orissa, Sri Bishwanath Das, we also feel like soldiers whose pleasure and duty is to carry out the orders of the Working Committee'.

'When I look to the constitution and the work of the present ministry during the last fourteen months, we can well claim that it was a Government by minorities, for the minorities, under the lead of the Congress. The fact that the Congress existed for the minorities was well proved in the administration of this province, thus disproving the propaganda from interested quarters that the Congress cannot safeguard the interests of minorities'.

'Our Government has also distinctly demonstrated that general measures, such as the prohibition of opium, exemption of land revenue to the agriculturists and extension of primary education, went more towards benefiting the tribal, backward and scheduled castes than for their more advanced brethren'.

'We are sorry that the tenancy legislation now in the legislature meant for the benefit of the tenantry of Goappara and Sylhet could not be passed. But we do hope that the country will appreciate that we did all that was possible for any Governments to do within the brief period of last fourteen months.

I will be failing in my duty if in this connection I fail to express my grateful thanks for the help and cooperation that was given not only by the Congress party, but also by the members of the Coalition and their representatives, to the Coalition Ministers.

I have been asked by a host of critics as to what we propose to do after our retirement from office. To them my reply must be that we would do whatever the Working Committee would direct us to do. I expect that in the present state of party division with a preponderating majority on our side, the Governor of this Province would not act differently from the Governors in the other Congress Provinces. We have before us the direction of Mahatmaji in reference to the constructive programme of the Congress, and I think, whether inside the legislature or outside it, we should try to push on that programme to the best of our ability. But, as I have said before, our entire activity will be guided by the Working Committee. It was mostly meant to be an opportunity for proceeding on that programme with a view to strengthening our desire and claim for independence. In my opinion, the superstructure of independence could be brought up only on the solid foundation of the fulfillment of such a programme. I see the day, not very far distant from now, when we shall have our much cherished freedom, but if we desire to maintain it as our own, we have to build however slow that process may be. I was not unaware, however, that this attitude was also developing in some of us a constitutionist mentality. If I hail this resignation for one other reason, it is because it will also give us time to ponder over our failings and shortcomings, if any, that had come over us in the meanwhile'.

104. 'The Next Step'

Editorial, *Tribune*, 18 November 1939

18 November 1939

[Extract]

With the resignation of the Congress ministry in Assam the process contemplated by the Congress Working Committee in its recent resolution of protest against the British Government's unsatisfactory response to the Congress demand for a clarification of Britain's war aims in relaxation to India has been completed, and the question that is being inevitably asked in all quarters, Congress and non-Congress alike, is, what is to be the next step? The Working Committee itself is about to meet at Allahabad for what promises to be one of its most momentous sessions ever held to discuss this vital question. In some quarters it seems to be taken for granted that the meeting will decide upon some form of civil disobedience. For our part, however, we entirely fail to see how the Working Committee can arrive at any such decision in face of the authoritative advice of Mahatma Gandhi against resort to civil disobedience, and of the weighty reason given by him in support of that advice. After all, civil disobedience, to serve any useful purpose; must be on a national scale, and civil disobedience on a national scale, no matter how and by whom it may be started, must as long the Mahatma is alive, be led by him. The Working Committee can, therefore, no more start a campaign of civil disobedience for the attainment of Swaraj, no matter what its form may be, against the advice of the Mahatma than the civil Government of a country can embark upon a war of decisive magnitude against the advice of its Commander-in-Chief. If anything, the improbability is the greater in this case because the Mahatma is not only the Congress's and India's greatest civil disobedience expert, but is also their foremost adviser in national affairs generally.

The reason given by the Mahatma against the Congress resorting to civil disobedience at the present time is absolutely conclusive. The British Government have made it perfectly clear that they are making a bid for the support of minority communities generally and the Muslim community and the scheduled classes in particular, and those communities, or rather the more vocal sections of these communities, as represented by Jinnah and Ambedkar, have made it no less clear that

they will readily stand by them in their effort to have their communal demands satisfied. In the circumstances any attempt that the Congress may make to enforce the national demand will have to reckon with the combined opposition of both the Government and the minority communities. As a matter of fact it may not improbably happen that just like the die-hards and reactionaries in England, the British Government will leave it to the extreme and separatist sections of the minorities to fight their own battle. Should this happen, the civil resistance will naturally assume the character of a civil war, and a civil war is the very last thing that any Congress man desires. Nor is this the only reason for avoiding a premature resort to civil disobedience....

From the point of view of the national struggle for freedom the resignation of the Congress Governments does not mark the end but only the beginning of the trial. It may suit the British Government's immediate purpose to describe the situation created by the resignations as the breakdown of the constitutional machinery. They, like India, know full well that the machinery has not broken down, and that the present is only a passing phase. Before long the Government will be forced in their own interest and for the very reason for which they introduced parliamentary government in the provinces to restore it, and the Congress will then have an opportunity of proving its mettle even more decisively than it has had so far. Resort to civil disobedience at the present time will not expedite but may on the contrary retard this process.

In our opinion the next step, so far as the Congress is concerned, is not to revert to civil disobedience, but to devise and carry out a programme of work, fully consonant with the parliamentary method, which will compel the British Government not only to restore the power and authority they have just taken back from the representatives of the people in the provincial sphere, without any justifiable reason, but to extend that power and authority to the central sphere as well. In other words now that the Congress is no longer in office and the legislatures themselves have for the moment become *functus officio* the chief work of the Congress members of the legislatures and of all those members who have sympathy with the Congress demand for responsible government is in the constituencies...

We have heard a great deal about the constructive programme of the Congress. Let that programme be carried out with this definite end in view. Almost every item of the programme can be made to play an effective part in this campaign of educating the electorate, Hindu-Muslim unity and the uplift of the depressed classes. In most of the legislatures the majority of the representatives of the Muslim community and the depressed classes are not in the Congress Party. The Congress ministers and other Congress members of the legislatures should so work both in the general constituencies and in the constituencies set apart for the Muslim and the depressed class representatives as to make sure that this position shall be substantially, if not radically, altered at the next election whenever it may take place. As regards the Khaddar programme, its chief significance to us is and has always been not economical but symbolical. To us it is the symbol of identification with and service to the masses. It is in that light that the Congress members should take it in the present case. The Congress can render far greater service to the masses by removing their just grievances and satisfying their vital needs in the various spheres of life than simply by each Congressman spinning for a short specified period during the day or wearing khadi-made (instead of Indian mill-made) cloth. After all, the essential thing here as elsewhere, is that it should be enjoined on each Congressman to 'deem a day barely passed in which he has given no thought to the hard life of garret and hovel, to the forlorn children and trampled women of wide squalid wildernesses in cities' and taken no step to alleviate their distress and lighten their hard lot; and if the Congress ministers and other Congress legislators who suddenly find themselves jobless by the suspension of the constitution will turn their attention to this all important duty, we have not the smallest doubt that not only will the foundations of responsible Government be well and truly

laid, but the British Government will before long be left with no option except to concede India's national demand in all its fullness...

105. M.K. Gandhi on Politics Vs. Morals

CWMG, Vol. 70. pp. 344-46

18 November 1939

In response to my suggestion in my article on the Congressman¹ Shri M.N. Roy has sent a long letter not to Dr Rajendra Prasad but to me.² He asks for a public discussion of the points raised by him. Omitting the prefatory paragraphs which have no interest for the reader, the letter is reproduced elsewhere.

To take the ministerial resignations first, I feel sure that they have added to the prestige of the Congress. The Working Committee would no doubt have done better to have accepted my proposal, only if it could have assimilated non-violence with all the implication suggested by me. But the members of the Working Committee were too conscious of their duty to accept my proposal mechanically and without heart belief. The Working Committee's resolution was, therefore, the only true course for the Working Committee to adopt. Having done so, resignations were the logical result.

It would have been unbecoming to have retained office for the doubtful advantage of guarding civil liberty. If they were ministers of autonomous States they could never have been ignored as they were about the war. Having been ignored, they would have been given satisfaction, when the attention of the British Government was drawn by the Working Committee to the grievous omission and when they were told how they could repair the mischief and retain India's cooperation in the prosecution of the war. The least that the Ministers could do, therefore, was to resign if only to show the hollowness of autonomy. To remain in office after the discovery of their impotence would have been to court ignominy. To remain in office for the protection of civil liberty would have been to mistake the wood for the tree. And Shri Roy may feel quite sure that the weakened Ministers would have been poor guardians of civil liberty. The Governors would have set aside their decisions and caught hold of those whom they would have chosen to imprison. The Ministers had taken office principally to advance independence. When they failed, they were bound to forego every advantage however great in itself. And they can never go back to their offices so long as the demand of the Congress remains unsatisfied.

Civil disobedience is by no means the next inevitable forward step. It depends upon a variety of circumstances, some of which I have already mentioned. Inaction is often the most effective action in the strategy of war, more so when the war is non-violent.

Now for the crucial point. Non-violence is the central fact of the civil disobedience technique. It was in 1920 that the Congress hooked its politics deliberately to fundamental morals and vital social reform, viz., prohibition and removal of untouchability. It also put the Charkha at the center of its economic programme. Indeed it eschewed the then known political programme, i.e., the parliamentary. Hence the introduction of morals into Congress fight for freedom. It is its core. There were a few grumblers then. But the vast majority welcomed the programme as the Congress has never done in the whole of its brilliant history. That programme justified itself by giving rise to a mass awakening on a phenomenal scale. By it the Congress gained an importance it had never before enjoyed. Shri Roy would not expect me at the stage to repeat here the argument that led to the enthusiastic acceptance of the programme. He should turn to the pages of *Young India* if he would know the pros and cons of the subject. The Congress became a mass democratic organization

from the time of acceptance of the programme, and it framed a democratic Constitution which stands to this day without much material and fundamental alteration.

The Congress had a double function. It is a democratic organization in peace time. It becomes a non-violent army in war time. In its second capacity it has no voting power. Its will is expressed by its general whoever he may be. Every unit has to tender him willing obedience in thought, word and deed. Yes, even thought, since the fight is non-violent.

Shri Roy and other Congressmen do not need to be told that I am not in the habit of losing co-workers. I go a long way with them in winning their affection and retaining it. But there does come a limit beyond which my compromise does not and cannot and should not go. No compromise is worth the name which endangers chances of success.

See *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. 70, pp. 321-23.

See enclosure: 1

106. Enclosure: 1 (Mr M.N. Roy's Letter)

This letter was published in *Harijan*, 18 November 1939

My dear Gandhiji,

From the very beginning, I was of the opinion that it would have been not only honourable and dignified, but politically useful for the Congress to adopt the policy originally recommended by you. I mean, the policy which has been called 'unconditional cooperation'. Since then, you have clearly defined what that policy would exactly mean. It would be moral support for the professed war aims of England, while there would be no active co-operation nor any active resistance. The attitude could be more correctly defined as that of benevolent neutrality. In my letter to the Congress President, written on October 19, I recommended neutrality on the part of the Congress, should the useless armed hostilities continue in Europe, disregarding an appeal for peace to be issued on behalf of the Congress and personally by yourself. The present policy of the Congress practically amounts to neutrality, to some extent. But I am of the opinion that it was not necessary to have the Congress Ministries resign at this stage. I expressed that opinion in my letter to the Congress President. In the same letter I explained how, remaining in office, Congressmen would not be necessarily obliged to co-operate willingly and actively in warlike preparations. I also pointed out how, on the contrary, the Congress Ministries could serve the very useful purpose of defending the maximum possible civil liberties against the operation of neutrality, in so far as armed hostilities or warlike preparations are concerned, the Congress would not find itself in the present deadlock, and could go ahead with the work for securing the freedom of India under whatever protection the Congress Ministries could offer. Launching upon the alternative policy of getting involved in an interminable controversy with the British Government, which can never be expected to give a positive reply to the Congress demand for the recognition of India as an independent nation, the Working Committee is being driven in the direction of a struggle for which, you are so decidedly of the opinion, the country is not prepared. This is not only an anomalous but a dangerous position. It could have been avoided, and it should have been avoided, if the Working Committee acted according to your original advice, even if they would not be influenced by the opinion of modest Congressmen like myself.

The above brief statement regarding the views of the particular group in behalf of which I am speaking, should satisfy your questions. This particular group obviously does not represent any centrifugal tendency. It is a group of loyal Congressmen who earnestly wish to strengthen the organization to which they belong. When it criticizes the policy of the present leadership and

suggests the necessity of an alternative leadership, thereby meaning a change of the policy, not necessarily the personnel it should not be accused of 'bidding for power'. I am decidedly of the opinion that the Congress will be seriously weakened, it will be in the danger of disintegration and demoralization, if its members are deprived of the right of such honest criticism, and even of revolt against a leadership when they feel that the organization is not being properly led according to its relevant principles.

You admit that 'the formation of different groups in a mass organization like the Congress is inevitable, and may be a distinct sign of progress and life'. This obvious contradiction can be explained only by the assumption that you have satisfied yourself that all is not 'well with the groups'. I do not know what is your source of information, nor do I hold any brief for the other groups, although I do not see any reason to doubt their *bonafides*. However, speaking for one particular group, I have no difficulty in giving straightforward replies to your questions, and in reassuring you that you need not be afraid, in so far as this group is concerned. As regards our attitude towards discipline, we have publicly disagreed with the prevailing conception among certain Congressmen in high quarter; but while expressing our honest convictions freely, in practise we have always submitted ourselves to the discipline of the organization to which we belong. Both the Congress President and the Secretary of the AICC will bear testimony to this fact.

As regards your question, what this particular group would like the Working Committee to do, I need not give any answer because already I have written to the Congress President in extenso. As regards the latter part of the same question, what would we do ourselves if the Congress President cannot comply with our wishes, the answer of this particular group is, while retaining the democratic right of agitating to convert the majority to our views, we shall abide by the decisions of the Congress. We have expressed our disapproval of oppositional groups inside the Congress acting in their own way whenever the decision of the majority goes against them. We have dissociated ourselves from the proposition of some opposition groups to organize war-resistance irrespective of the decision of the Congress.

I believe, this much will relieve you of any anxiety that you may have about the intents and purposes of this particular group. Now I turn to the question which, in your opinion, is crucial.

I must confess that I have been rather perplexed by your insistence on tracing the root of every evil to the 'absence of a living faith in non violence in thought, word and deed'. With the highest respect for your idealism, and admiration for the ideal of non-violence itself, I cannot help feeling that your insistence on absolute non-violence is not a practical proposition. An ideal cannot be realized before the pre-conditions thereof are created. I also have an ideal, perhaps it is more modest than that of non-violence. My ideal is the establishment of a social order in which human beings will be free from the present limitations to their progress in every department of life. In one word, that ideal is called Socialism. But it would be a foolishly impractical proposition for me to insist that from today everybody must be a Socialist in thought, word and deed. Much ground is to be covered before the ideal can be attained. In doing that we may not be always strictly acting according to the ideal; but in so far as every step in that direction brings us nearer to our ideal, we remain faithful to it. However, you may not be convinced by these arguments of logical or theoretical nature. Having regard for your view about the relation between the end and the means, I shall not press the point any more.

As a practical politician, I cannot take up the same attitude towards non-violence as you do. The Congress being primarily a political organization all its policies and activities should be determined by political considerations. That is my firm opinion, and I have never made any secret of it. I am also of the opinion that this skeptical attitude towards a moral proposition which, however noble it may be by itself, is obviously irrelevant to our political purpose, does not in any

way disqualify me to be a member of the Congress. If alarming signs of the Congress weakening are to be detected on all sides, the danger is not to be found in the honestly critical attitude of tribe fighter for freedom like myself, but in the spirit of intolerance and dogmatism spreading throughout the country on your authority. People, having not the least in common with you, altogether incapable of ever sharing your "living faith". known far and wide to be always acting to the contrary, go about as the self-appointed conscience-keepers of all Congressmen, have instituted throughout the Congress organization a veritable system of moral inquisition. This pretence of morality on the part of the hypocrite is simply intolerable. As Congressmen, we are always ready to obey the instructions of all constitutionally competent authorities, although the sense of discipline cannot make us less zealous about our democratic right, which is to express our disagreement boldly and to endeavour to make the leaders take notice of the rank and file opinion, and to see that the Congress policy conforms to the will of the entire organization and is determined according to the realities of the situation and necessities of the country.

Groups existing inside the Congress with this spirit can never do any harm to the organization; on the contrary, as you yourself say, they 'may be a distinct sign of progress and life'. The basis of the unity of the Congress must be its political programme. So long as Congressmen are united with the purpose, their views on other questions should not be subjected to any uniform standard. If the political programme of the Congress is subordinated to other considerations, if the loyalty of Congressmen is to be judged not by their devotion to that ideal and the determination to fight for it but by the profession of irrelevant faiths, then the Congress will be in the danger of disintegration. This dangerous tendency is asserting itself throughout the Congress organization. Hence the weakness that you fear and detect.

As far as the members of this particular group are concerned, they will never do anything to weaken the Congress, although they reserve the right to disagree with, and oppose the introduction of, doctrine and ideas having no bearing upon the political programme of the Congress. We regard the doctrine of non violence as developed by you as such. Therefore, we have always criticized it, and we are definitely of the opinion that your insistence upon the impractical proposition of every Congressman having a 'living faith in non-violence in thought, word and deed' does more harm than good to the Congress, because it puts a premium on consummate hypocrisy. Congressmen are driven to hypocritical professions, not because they are morally depraved, but because you ask them to do the impossibility of transcending the limitations of their physical being. It is easier to pretend perfection than to have the courage to plead inability.

Finally, I must sound a note of warning. It will be an evil day for Congress, if honest and determined fighters for freedom are asked to choose between the obligatory acceptance of creed they do not believe in, and the freedom to leave the Congress. We shall never forfeit our intellectual independence, nor shall we voluntarily leave the organization credited by the masses of the Indian people. If, for no other fault than the courage of conviction and our devotion to the cause of Indian Freedom, we shall ever be driven out of the Congress, then the responsibility of weakening and destroying this organization will belong to others.

I have spoken frankly,—with a heavy heart. I have made rather disagreeable and even bitter experience since I returned to this country with no other object than to place my services at the disposal of the great organization leading our struggle for freedom. I have been looked upon with suspicion, treated as an outcaste, although I have the poor satisfaction of seeing some of my modest contributions going home, often much too belated and indirectly. I have spoken frankly, because I am speaking to a seeker of truth. Truth is not always beautiful, nor is the beautiful always true. Our country is passing through very fateful moments of its history. Today its future is in the hand of the Congress. The leaders of the Congress, therefore, should be always conscious of this

grave responsibility which can never be successfully discharged except with the aid of collective intelligence of the entire organization and a realistic view of the ugly truths of the situation. I and those Congressmen associated with me only want to help the Congress leaders discharge their responsibility. Blind obedience is not enough for that. We claim the right of approaching every problem according to our own lights, and offer our solutions, naturally hoping that they will be accepted when all other alternatives are found lacking. I presume you will appreciate the legitimacy as well as the honesty of this attitude, and do not doubt our motives.

Respectfully yours,
M.N. Roy

Dehradun, 7 November 1939

107. In the Aftermath of Resignation: Haig to Linlithgow,
21 November 1939

Haig Papers, Microfilm Roll No. 1, NMML

[Extracts]

Since I last wrote to you on 8th November, the general situation in the Province has remained practically unchanged. The curious lull continues, and on the surface it would seem that the great mass of the people have taken the disappearance of the Congress Ministry with indifference or with relief. This, however, takes no account of the ability of the Congress organization to stir up trouble and rouse feeling. One might say that the ocean lies at the moment calm and with hardly a ripple; but the same ocean would present a very different appearance under the influence of a strong gale. There seems no doubt that just at present the ordinary Congress workers are doing nothing, and in a perplexing situation, are waiting for instructions. The official fortnightly letter gives a fair summary of the reports we have been receiving from the districts which record this general condition of tranquility. At the same time it would be a mistake to suppose that the left wing have in any way changed their views or intentions. I should judge that they are reluctant to embark on any serious activities so long as they hope to be able by waiting to bring the right wing in with them. But sooner or later, with or without the right wing, I think they are bound to start their campaign.

2. I was greatly interested in what your Excellency told me of the situation from your point of view. I am writing from Allahabad where the Working Committee is now conferring. I think there is general recognition of the fact that no further move at present can be expected from your side. On the other hand in view of the very rigid attitude that the Congress has publicly adopted, I do not see what genuine approach Gandhi could make to Your Excellency, though he might well try manoeuvre. It looks to me as if the situation is heading steadily for civil disobedience, though Gandhi with his usual technique requires a period of more or less open preparation. The only thing as it seems to me that might prevent this development is a Hindu-Muslim agreement, but I cannot say that I regard that as likely. Here again, however, I think the Congress will manoeuvre as to try to put the Muslims in the wrong, and may make some offer which would not go far enough.

3. In the circumstances described above District Officers have found it necessary to take very little action on their own responsibility. I have sanctioned a few prosecutions which I regarded as important, all of them cases which had come up before the Ministry and on which they had postponed taking a decision. The most important is the prosecution of Bishambhar Dayal Tripathi, MLA, of the Unnao district. He is the Secretary of the Forward Bloc in this Province and for

months past has been a great embarrassment to my late Ministry. He has not only been making a series of bad speeches, but he has worked up tenant feeling to a very considerable extent in the district and the position was regarded as having its dangers. He had been openly defying the Government to prosecute him, and it seemed to me important that in his case there should be no delay in making it clear that I intended to maintain order. His arrest which was effected about a week ago created very little excitement and has not been much commented on in the local Congress paper. I think we arrested him just at the right time, for after orders had issued, I heard that he was starting on another of his whirlwind tours of speech making round the district. Another person who has been arrested in respect of a bad speech made a little time ago is Manmatha Nath Gupta,¹ one of the ex-Kakori prisoners, a man who has for a long time past been writing and speaking in an unrestrained and violent manner. It will be a good thing to have him out of the way...

¹ Manmatha Nath Gupta (b.1908): Education at Varanasi; jailed at the age of 13 during the Non Co-operation movement, arrested in 1925 in the Kakori conspiracy Case and sentenced to 14 years RI; released in 1937, but rearrested the same year and given four months RI; worked in youth leagues, Kisan Sabhas and labour union during 1938 and 1939, arrested again and imprisoned for two years for giving anti-war speeches when the Second World War began; kept as a detenus for five years; released in April 1946.

108. The Passing of Congress Ministry

Letter to the Editor, *Leader*, 21 November 1939

21 November 1939

Sir,

Many non-Congressmen like myself had in 1937 strained hard to persuade the Congress politicians by creating public opinion to form ministries under the new constitution. It will now require a bold man to say so, but it is nevertheless a fact, especially having regard to the politics of our province, the UP which is looked upon as the crucible of all India politics, that many of the erstwhile well-wishers of the Congress will now heave a sigh of relief at their exit. There were two outstanding defects in the Congress administration of these provinces at any rate: (i) It had in many instances quite unnecessarily antagonised the various vested interests and classes, e.g. the zamindar and the lawyer class. (ii) It had bungled and bungled outright in dealing with the most vexed of questions, the communal problem. On this question the Congress Government never seemed to know its mind behind it. In spite of the large number of riots that became such a frequent phenomenon during the last two years, there was not a single public speech delivered by a responsible Congress Minister feeling by about this menace and suggesting ways and means to create communal harmony and goodwill. The prescription consistently followed by the Congressmen was to ignore and shelve the problem and leave it to the discretion of our steel-framed services to handle the local situation as best as they could, or just as they had been managing it before provincial autonomy came into being. The result was that while the Hindus every time found that their peaceful processions duly sanctioned by the authorities could not be successfully taken out through the public road whenever a Muslim mob chose to put up a determined obstruction. Even the Muslim community had a legitimate cause for complaint against the vacillating policy of the Government in the matter of Shia-Sunni dispute at the metropolis. As a consequence of this bungling and want of thought while the Hindus now accused the Congress Government of following a policy of appeasement of the Muslims at their cost, the Muslims dubbed it as an unadulterated Hindu Government in as much as the Muslim members of the Cabinet were mere protégés of the Congress leaders and did not command any influence with their community.

The Congressmen now generally concede that they committed a great blunder in not forming a coalition ministry with the Muslim League party in the legislature. It was again one of the Himalayan blunders of Jawaharlal Nehru to start a Muslim mass contact movement of which, it is said, the Ahrar party was a bastard offspring. Inside the local legislature with a safe majority at its beck and call the Congress party lost its mental balance, for instead of following the democratic practice of conciliating the opposition parties, it went out of its way to antagonize them. An enlightened Hindu Government would have frankly discussed the thorny question of the music before mosque with the local leaders of Muslim opinion, and any compromise arrived at on that question would have been enforced. To the Hindus the Hindu Government might have said that it was in keeping with the spirit of toleration taught by their religion and culture to respect all places of worship as temples of God and to stop not only all music but all cries of 'jais' so long as one single Muslim thought that his prayer would be disturbed by processional music or other noise. If, however, the Hindus in their narrow-mindedness cannot translate into practice the high doctrines of their religion and philosophy, they ought to agree upon a formula allowing the Muslims to form a Government by rotation and have a Muslim Premier like the Nawab Sahib of Chhatari, in whose sense of fairness and, above all, gentlemanness, the Hindus of this province repose sufficient faith. This ought to be the policy and politics of a province with an overwhelming Hindu majority.

The Congress hierarchy had also in its wisdom, probably with a view to placate Muslim opinion, done nothing to condemn the communal award, of which the grossest iniquity was the imposition of separate electorates upon unwilling Hindu minorities. It should be recognized as one of the fundamental rights of a minority to decide for itself whether it will have a joint or a separate electorate. As a popular Government the Congress ought to have carried on a propaganda for communal concord and unity. But nothing of the kind was done except of course, the issuing of a notorious bulletin on the part of the Government Publicity Department in which instances were quoted where the administration had yielded to a truculent Muslim mob by sacrificing the lawful interests of law-abiding Hindus. Whoever cared to read these blessed bulletins wanted to condemn the Congress administration.

Now that the Congress Ministries have resigned of their own accord and the constitution has been suspended, both the Hindus and the Muslims ought to press their demand through their communal representatives for a re-election and reformation of the provincial legislature on the ground that the present legislature did no longer truly reflect the various public interests and also stood self-condemned. It had gone out unwept, unhonoured and unsung.

P.M.L. Verma
10 Lawther Road
George Town
Allahabad

109. In the Aftermath of Resignation:

G.D. Birla¹ to Mahadev Desai, 30 November 1939

G.D. Birla, *Bapu: A Unique Association*, Vol. 3, Bombay, Bhartiya Vidya Bhavan, 1977, pp. 353-54

My dear Mahadevbhai,

I have not yet met any big boss, but from the atmosphere here I gather that the position is something like this:

1. The Viceroy is extremely anxious to resolve the differences and see the Congress back in office but he would not be allowed to make any declaration which would in any way offend the Muslims. It is impossible for them to do so at this stage. After we have resigned, the Punjab and Bengal ministers have been taking a very defiant attitude. Ramaswamy Mudaliar,² the Commerce Member, who recently went to Calcutta, was waited upon by a deputation consisting of European jute mill-owners. They very bitterly complained against the ministers saying that on account of constant speculation by the ministers the business had become very unstable in Calcutta. The Commerce Member, of course, could not give them any consolation. The Punjab and Bengal ministries are reported to have told the Government of India that under the instructions of the Muslim League they were carrying their resignations in their pockets. And since the Congress ministries have resigned, people here dare not offend them.

2. The Home Cabinet seems to feel that the Viceroy has already offended the Princes and they would not like him to take any risk as far as the Muslims are concerned unless they could be sure of placating the Congress in a reasonable way. And even they will not take any big risk with the Muslims. They cannot forget that in the near East all the powers are Muslim Powers and just now they are involved in war.

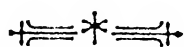
3. The Muslims will not settle with us under any circumstances unless we are prepared to give them vetoing power in constitutional matters. Jinnah and others are bitterly complaining that Jawaharlal never tried to negotiate with them and now they have taken up the attitude that when Jawaharlal sees Jinnah next time, Jinnah will tell him that they could both talk as individuals but that if we really wanted to negotiate, the Congress must write officially to the Muslim League, recognizing the latter as the representative of the Muslim community of India. And 50-50 will be the basis.

4. There is thus no chance of a settlement. Men like Jagdish and Ramaswamy Mudaliar and some other feel that had we been in office the Muslims would have been in a better mood to settle with us. Now there will be no settlement so far as they are concerned. They are all still hoping that Gandhiji will do something to resolve the differences and get the Congress ministries back in the provinces. Every high placed Hindu here seems to feel that unless we are in power the Muslims will never settle. Sir Jagdish, of course, feels that if by any chance we get in the Executive Council of the Viceroy, eight provinces and the Centre will become more or less Congress governments. I think there is much in what they say. I am just letting you know how the wind blows.

Yours sincerely,
Ghanshyamdas

¹ Ghanshyamdas Birla (1894-1983); leading industrialist, politician and financier of the Congress movement. In politics he claimed to be 'In the Shadow of the Mahatma' and was in regular touch with, among others, Rajendra Prasad and Mahadev Desai. He was closely associated with various industrial organizations, representing their interests in the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI), the Second Round Table Conference (1931), and in the course of the Indo British Trade negotiations in 1936-37.

² A. Ramaswamy Mudaliar (b. 1887); educated at the Madras Christian College and Law College, Madras; member of the Madras Legislative Council (1920-26), Indian Legislative Assembly (1931-34); Indian Franchise Committee and the Indian Reserve Bank Committee; Honorary editor of the *Justice* from 1927 to 1935.



110. In the Aftermath of Resignation:

The Viceroy's assessment: Linlithgow to Haig, 1 December 1939

Haig Papers, Microfilm Roll No. 1, NMML

[Extracts]

...many thanks for your interesting secret letter of 21st November, No. UP 326. Let me first say how distressed I am to hear that you are not yet fully recovered, and how much I hope that there has been an improvement since you wrote; I can well imagine the strain under which you must be working. The account which you give me of affairs is on the whole encouraging and in the UP, as in other ex-Congress Provinces, there seems to have been a satisfactory compliance with the desire of the High Command as expressed by Gandhi in his conversations with me, that incidents should, so far as possible, be avoided.

2. I note your judgment that it would be a mistake to suppose that the Left Wing had in any way changed their views or intentions, and I was much interested to gather from a conversation which Birla had with my Private Secretary yesterday that Gandhi had gone to Allahabad in a somewhat uncertain frame of mind as to what was likely to happen there, the chief cause of apprehension being the possible attitude of the UP 'leftists' and the fact that he had been given to understand that Left Wing influence was very strong, if not predominant, in the UP Congress committees. His apprehensions of difficulty were, however, it appears unfounded, and according to Birla, Gandhi's influence was decisive at Allahabad, although the resolution as actually drafted showed clear signs of the hand of Nehru.

4. Let me in the first place give you as briefly as possible the situation as I see it. So far as Congress is concerned, the Working Committee, by calling our ministries, if only for the time being, have at any rate re-asserted their control over the whole organization. Subhas and the Left Wing, though still in my judgment very important, and a potential source of trouble of real significance, have ceased for the moment to be as important as they were, and I think your impression will probably accord with mine that we have heard very little from the Left Wing since the Ministries came out. Indeed, I have often suspected that the desirability of reinforcing discipline and of re-establishing the Working Committee's control was a potent, if not an expressed, factor in the Working Committee's decision to call out ministries and in Gandhi's policy. The Working Committee similarly are anxious to avoid civil disobedience as long as possible, partly because the country is not really prepared for it at the moment, and because rising prices, etc., are likely to remove, or diminish the force of, the economic factors that could be turned to advantage under civil disobedience; partly because the Congress case is not a very good one to the ordinary thinking man, and, finally, because any recrudescence of civil disobedience is almost inevitably bound to play into the hands of the Left Wing and so to disintegrate again this hardly re-established control of the Working Committee and the Conservative elements over the general organization.

5. Lastly, the Working Committee have everything to gain, from the point of view of Parliament and public opinion, at home, and internationally, from securing their very substantial objectives by peaceful and constitutional means. The ideal from their point of view would obviously be that HMG should commit themselves to some form or some scale of constitutional advance which Parliament would be prepared to accept and the effect of which would be to recognize Congress as the one real organisation, and the one real party to be reckoned with in this country. It would be a corollary that the Muslims would in such circumstance find themselves under a predominant Congress influence, even though as the price of their acquiescing in that position Congress might be prepared to make quite substantial concessions in relation to coalition ministries, additional safeguards for Muslims in the Provinces, and possibly concessions in regard to defence and military

recruitment, the position at the Centre, etc. I do not believe they have really thought over the problem of the Princes, but there, too, they might conceivably be willing, at any rate in the early stages, to go some way to conciliate the Princely Order with a view to tightening their control in that direction later. But I would judge that Congress endeavours are likely essentially to concentrate on securing, in the first place, recognition of their position as the mouthpiece of India as a whole; and secondly, the extensive objectives I have already mentioned, if possible by legitimate constitutional means, and their consolidation and maintenance by the Parliamentary sanction represented by Parliamentary recognition of whatever agreement was come to, and by the ultimate backing of British troops and of the army in India in the event of internal difficulty.

6. The Muslims, after 2½ years of Congress rule, leave on me the impression of being at once profoundly embittered by instances (very difficult for the most part to prove, but significant of the atmosphere that prevails) of the continued oppression in small ways of Muslim minorities in the Congress provinces. Side by side with that there goes the growing realization of the importance from their point of view of the Congress claim to be the sole mouthpiece of Indian opinion and the sole party with whom business ought to be done by HMG deteriorates further. The result is, of course, seen in the consolidation of Muslim opinion in the Muslim League (I am fully alive to the internal dissensions in that body but they are not decisive as yet); the crystallization of the Muslim demands and the pitching of those demands, to change my metaphor on a very much higher lever than hitherto. The demand, as we see it to-day, is that future arrangements in this country shall be dealt with not on the basis of population figures, but on the basis of communities, and that the Muslims, whatever their numerical strength, shall be treated on complete equality with the Hindus and that no declaration of any constitutional change shall be made that does not commend itself to the two communities (No doubt in basing their demands on communities rather than parties they hope to take advantage of the fact that there are certain Hindu organizations, such as the Mahasabha and the National Liberals which contest the Congress claim, and that the Scheduled Castes still demand to be treated separately). At the same time, the Muslims are nothing like as well organized as the Congress and I have never been able to treat lightly the probability that as time goes on the nationalist leaven, and the great appeal which the idea of freedom and independence for India must constitute to any younger generation, will make itself felt, and that to that extent to base ourselves too confidently on the present Muslim attitude might well be a bad mistake.

7. I do not think I need, in this letter, touch on the position of the remaining interests, or of more conservative and Right wing elements, nor do I think that I need discuss the position of the princes, the general outline of which is, of course, entirely familiar to you. So far as HMG are concerned, they will naturally be anxious to reach a peaceful settlement with India, to secure that business is conducted on ordinary constitutional lines in the Provinces with the support of a majority in the legislature, and to get the best working arrangement they can at the Centre—preferably one which will secure problems such as defence, finance, the minorities, and their obligations to the Princes. To Dominion Status they are committed, though they are not and cannot be committed as to its date. They are equally committed to taking full account of the views expressed by the various Indian parties in relation to the Act of 1935. But they are not committed in any way to surrendering their freedom of judgment. The idea of a Constituent Assembly which has only begun to emerge in the last few days is one on which again they are not committed (and the difficulties are obvious) and still more or less their hands entirely free as regards any suggestion that they must put their names to whatever might as an agreed solution emerge from the deliberations of parties in this country. Finally, on the matter of the 'Freedom' or 'Independence' of India they have not gone, and will not, as I see it, be likely to go beyond Dominion Status.

Dominion Status, after all, connotes the largest degree of freedom and independence practicable within the Empire. And the case of the Irish Free State or South Africa in these last two or three months clearly indicates how large a measure of freedom and Independence Dominion Status under the Statute of Westminster represents.

8. That is, I think, a not unfair analysis of the more important features of the general position that confronts us. Since the war, I have, with the approval of HMG, made a variety of moves with a view to meeting Congress and Muslims, and to securing the ready cooperation of both parties in the prosecution of the war by removing misapprehensions and by giving further guarantees as to our future intentions. (I may remark, incidentally, that there is a certain unreality about all this, since the Hindu business community stands to benefit very substantially in time of war from active cooperation and from the opportunities to development which India's participation in it and the supplies she can send abroad afford. So far as recruitment is concerned there are, as we both know, disturbing features and disturbing incidents from time to time. But we can probably get far more men from our main recruiting areas than we could possibly embody and pay for, and we shall get these recruits, in all probability, whatever happens about the constitutional issue. So far as public opinion generally is concerned, while all parties will, of course, gladly pick up anything they can out of our difficulties, there is no question of any conflict of sympathy between the Indian parties and HMG as to the case for fighting Hitlerism. On the other hand, the 'nuisance' value of the Congress opposition, and so far as it goes of Muslim opposition, is very considerable at a time when enemy propaganda is so well organized, and apart from that a civil disobedience situation or a really determined hostility on the part of the great political parties, or even one of them, could not but tend to cramp our efforts and to reduce the value of the contribution which we may otherwise be able to make to the successful prosecution of the war.

9. The various proposals which we have put forward by way of consolidating Congress opinion in particular have so far proved inadequate. The postponement of federation has been well received by the Muslims and at any rate publicly by the Congress, though I suspect that the latter would give a great deal to be able to get now to the scheme of Part II of the Act. The proposals for the association of Indian opinion on a broad basis with the conduct of the war at the center has clearly fallen rather flat. The proposal to enlarge my Council by taking in a small number of political leaders on the same basis of the existing Councillors has received no serious consideration, though I have reason to believe that there is a good deal of difference of opinion in Congress as to the wisdom of the handling of that proposal. Our endeavours, whether here or at home, to dissipate any possible misunderstanding as to our war aims, etc., whether for India or for the world, have been declared inadequate and that is equally true as regards our explanations to the effect that we are not fighting to preserve 'Imperialism', however defined. We are faced with the demand for freedom or independence to which I have referred to above, and failing satisfaction of that demand Congress ministries have been withdrawn from office. The Muslim Ministries remain and are carrying on their duties contentedly. But on the Muslim side, too, I have still to satisfy Jinnah and his friends on certain matters and in particular they are anxious to secure a clear understanding that there should be no constitutional move without their concurrence. My endeavours to bring the two communities together with a view to their reaching such a degree of agreement between themselves in respect of the Provinces as might make it possible for them to work harmoniously in an enlarged center (it is clearly only a stepping stone to a further advance) have failed. I have in these circumstances promised that I will, in due course, make another endeavour to solve the problem. But I have had no constructive suggestion from any political quarter in this country or indeed anything except to reiterate by Congress of their demand for a satisfactory declaration of our aims for the war generally and for India, now complicated by the addition of a demand for the

settlement of India's problems by a Constituent Assembly based on the widest possible franchise, the consequences of which, it is suggested in some quarters, should be automatically accepted by HMG.

10. I will frankly admit to you that in the circumstances I have described above I am not too optimistic that we shall be able to avoid trouble or to get the Congress Ministries back to office in the Provinces. I see no sign of any weakening which excluded the Princely Order. While I have not yet formed any conclusion and while the situation with which we are dealing might admit of being resolved, or the crisis postponed, by ingenious draftsmanship, or the like, I think it is only wise for us to look ahead, and consider the position that arises if my efforts to reach a peaceful settlement fail. In that event, as I see it, the position will be that we must either succumb to Congress pressure, and accept that the assistance they can give us in the prosecution of the war and nuisance value of enemy propaganda based on their alleged grievances is so great that we are not prepared to ignore the Muslims, the Princes, the Scheduled Castes and the minor minorities or to divest ourselves of our own responsibility for the shaping (by all means in consultation with Indian opinion) of the future constitution of India; and that we are prepared to face a lengthy break with Congress.

11. While I continue to hope for the best, I think we may well reach this point, and I propose, though at this stage only as a precautionary measure, so to inform the Secretary of State, so that he and the Cabinet can turn the position over in their minds in advance of the actual contingency arising. I have no doubt that we could in such circumstances make a pretty good case for ourselves from the publicity point of view. But we must, on the other hand, reckon seriously with the fact that it will be very difficult to get our case across to the electorate at home, and that our attitude, however reasonable it may be intrinsically, will admit of misrepresentation at home in just the same way, though on a different basis, as in enemy propaganda. Nor will HMG naturally be anxious to find themselves faced with a major crisis or at any rate a major political issue in time of war.

12. Acceptance of a break such as I have referred to would, of course, mean that the former Congress provinces would continue to be governed under Section 93 unless and until an alternative government with a parliamentary majority could be found. It might mean that we should have to face the much more serious issue whether our Western democratic institutions were really adapted to the East at all, but that is not a point which I think we have yet reached, or a possibility which we need discuss. What I should welcome would be your own reaction to the picture (if you accept it as a correct one) of the situation which I have endeavoured to sketch above, and in particular your view as to what the reaction here might be expected to be to such a breakdown as would be represented by complete inability to reach agreement between Congress and ourselves, with the result that Section 93 would for an indefinite period be likely to operate in the former Congress provinces, and that we might also have to contemplate civil disobedience of more or less gravity. The importance or otherwise of the issue from the point of view of reaction of Parliament and of foreign propaganda are, of course, matters on which neither you nor I are in a position to express any decisive opinion. Only the Secretary of State can assess them at their true value, and I do not think that beyond formally taking note of their existence and of their very immediate relevance to the present issue we need concern ourselves with them in any detail. Any other observations that suggest themselves to you in the light of your long and varied experience would, I need not say, be of the greatest interest and value to me in dealing with the problem—a problem in respect to which I cannot help feeling that the Viceroy of the time must inevitably bear a personal responsibility of almost intolerable weight.

111. In the Aftermath of Resignation: The Political Scene in UP

Haig to Linlithgow, 4 December 1939

Haig Papers, Microfilm Roll No. 1, NMML

My dear Lord Linlithgow,

Many thanks for your long and interesting letter, dated 1 December 1939 and for its very illuminating analysis of the present situation. I will endeavour in accordance with your request to give my own impression; but I am sure you will realize that my attention recently has been concentrated more on our provincial problems than on the very difficult all-India issues that confront Your Excellency, and that I am writing under considerable pressure of time on the eve of my departure. I hope therefore you will make allowance for these two factors.

With regard to our provincial situation, I have already mentioned the remarkable lull that has existed since the Ministry resigned. That is of course in the main due to the fact that the Congress right wing have taken no action, as they are still groping for a policy, and the left wing have kept quiet, as they do not wish to embark on any serious movement without the support of the Congress organization behind them. But I think there is more to it than that. One is inclined to assume that because we have a legislature overwhelmingly Congress, the feeling of the masses corresponds. Actually I have been receiving information for many months past that in the villages generally the first enthusiasm of the Congress victory has died down and that Congress influence is very much less than it used to be. This is partly due to disappointment at many unfulfilled promises, partly to the realization that local Congress workers, though they may be useful, require, like the minor functionaries of the administration, payment for their services and are very often unable in the end to deliver the goods. It would be a mistake to suppose that the masses are naturally enthusiastic supporters of the Congress. A year before the general election the Province gave every sign of being peaceful and contented, Congress influence appeared generally negligible and Congress activities small. I do not think this was an illusion. It was only in the few months immediately preceding the general election that feeling was worked up by an intense Congress campaign and reckless promises of what the Congress would do if they came into power. Having secured their majority by these means the Congress had no difficulty in reviling their authority on the Province. The masses think in terms of 'raj', and it was quite clear that Congress 'raj' had come. They accepted this at first with great hope and enthusiasm, but lately without any great interest. Now that Congress 'raj' has suddenly disappeared, they accept with more or less equal indifference the Governor's 'raj'. I do not underestimate the power of Congress to rouse the masses when there is any subject which can really appeal to them. But left to themselves, the masses are indifferent to Congress aims and are only stirred by what appears to them to be a possible improvement of their own conditions.

We have been accustomed for some time to rate the influence of the left wing of the Congress in this Province very high, in the party organization the left wing influence has been strong, and the obvious reluctance of the right wing to take any action against them or to restrain their activities even when illegal had created an impression that they were more powerful than perhaps they really are. I am now inclined to the view that if the left wing were hit pretty hard they would not be found to have as much resisting power as one might have supposed a little time ago, and I think perhaps they recognized this and that is why they are reluctant to embark on a movement unsupported by the right wing.

The Congress as a whole seem to me to have got into a very difficult and weak position. They have taken the occasion of a war, to which they cannot really declare themselves opposed, to demand certain political concessions. That may have been perfectly sound tactics up to a certain

point, provided they would be content with such concessions as might reasonably be expected and did not push matters to an actual fight with the British Government. In the early stages I thought in fact that that was their policy. But whether by accident or deliberately they have now passed away from that position and seem to me to be making most unreasonable demands just at the time when they have voluntarily surrendered one of the chief elements of their power. By ordering the resignation of the Ministries they have, as it seems to me, lost a great deal of their hold on the people. That is certainly the interpretation I put on the position in this Province. If the resignation were to be followed at an early date by a civil disobedience movement, the action would have been intelligible. But for reasons which I will mention in a moment they are I believe most reluctant to embark on civil disobedience. At the same time if after throwing away their position of authority in virtue of the Ministries they remain quiet and do not start any big popular movement, it seems to me inevitable that they will steadily lose influence and position, and it will be very difficult for them to reconcile themselves to that.

The reasons why I think the Congress are very reluctant to embark on civil disobedience are—

- (a) They have no issue which is really likely to rouse the masses at this moment, and the masses are not likely to support them without some such issue; in other words they are not a good ground in launching a civil disobedience movement at present.
- (b) If they do launch such a movement, the violent left wing elements are almost certain to gain control of it. This will both bring the movement into discredit and weaken the position of the right wing.
- (c) A movement of this kind is almost bound to result in serious communal rioting and to show the world in an unmistakable manner how bitter are the feelings between Hindus and Muslims. Moreover, the Hindus are not likely to get the better of such rioting and their whole position may be shaken by it.

I think it is important to realize what a very weak and difficult position the Congress are in. They are of course talking very bravely, and they still hope that they will be able by means of propaganda to talk His Majesty's Government into seeking concessions which would establish them in a position of great strength. But words seem to me at the moment the principal weapon to their armoury.

The Muslim League attitude is of crucial importance. It is beginning to look as if the only escape the Congress may have from an exceedingly weak position is if they can secure the support of the Muslims, which could only be obtained at a pretty high price. The Muslims naturally look on this matter entirely from the point of view of their own interests. Will it be better for them on the whole to support the British or to make terms with the Congress? That position was put to me quite frankly in a recent conversation by Chaudhri Khaliqzaman, the leader of the Muslim League in this Province. He said that if Jinnah thinks, as a result of his communications with Your Excellency, that when it comes to devising a new constitution after the war, they can depend on firm protection from the British, then they will reject the Congress overtures. If on the other hand they think that the British will not in fact give them safeguards that they would consider adequate, they will probably make such terms as they can with the Congress. I myself, however, doubt whether the Congress would really be prepared to make the very big concessions on which the Muslim would probably insist as their minimum, and whether the Muslims would trust the Congress to keep faith. Assuming that there is no agreement between the Muslim League and the Congress, the attitude of the Muslim League seems to me to make anything like mass civil disobedience a most dangerous step for the Congress to take. As I have mentioned in an earlier letter, Khaliq

declares that in that event the Muslims would come out on their own and would fight the Congress, and certainly I have little doubt that the Muslims would not remain more or less neutral spectators of a conflict between the British and the Congress.

This brings me to the critical question, namely, what kind of constitution is contemplated after the war. The attitude of the Congress I should have supposed was not so much a demand that Parliament should recognize them as the one real organization to be reckoned within the country, as that Parliament should agree to a type of constitution which would in effect entrench them permanently in power. The type of constitution which will have that effect is one based on extreme democratic principles. The Congress are thus in the matter of propaganda which meant to influence British or world opinion on very good ground. The British Government tend to think mainly in terms of maintaining certain elements of control and maintaining certain interests. I am not sure that it would not be wiser to face a very considerable surrender of power if we could devise a constitution which would not leave India entirely at the mercy of the Hindus, and as the inevitable result of an extreme democratic system, at the mercy of the most extreme Hindus. I feel myself that the worst feature of the present constitution is the franchise. That was forced upon us by the somewhat theoretical democratic ideas of the British Parliament in force of the protests, I believe, of every local Government. Now after the experience we have had it is widely recognized that with a franchise even on the present scale, the Congress, and increasingly the extremist Congress elements, are bound to rule the country. The Congress realizing this are now pressing for adult franchise. This I take to be the root of the obvious fears of democracy expressed by the Muslims. I do not for a moment suggest that we can take a system either of autocracy or bureaucracy, but do think that in any revision of the constitution we should see whether we cannot do something to modify the very serious dangers in a country like this of an extreme form of democracy.

I have not had time to look up the various pronouncements that have been made with regard to the future policy of His Majesty's Government. They have been made piecemeal, and I am not sure that they have left on the public mind a very clear impression. It might in some future time be desirable to state more positively what is intended, and to express our policy as something that the Government really believe in and wish to carry out rather than something dragged reluctantly out of them by Congress demands. But really speaking it seems to me that we have gone as far as we reasonably can, and that it would be extremely damaging both to the future of India and to our present position to go further at the moment, for it would be regarded as a capitulation to Congress threats. I would therefore say that we must broadly speaking stand fast on the existing position and face the consequences. Gandhi seems to me to be pursuing this normal tactics. He makes very far-reaching public demands and then says he is prepared to negotiate about them. By making the extreme demands he encourages his extremists. By expressing a desire to negotiate he seeks to conciliate reasonable opinion in India and elsewhere. Any further concessions that he can get by these methods are interpreted as due to the fear of this extreme threats and greatly strengthen his position. But in fact, as I have suggested above, it is probably the Congress and not the British who are really in a weak position at the moment, and I would say that we should face a break rather than make any further substantial concessions.

If a break were to come, I do not myself think that the War effort of India would be greatly impeded. At present in fact India's war effort is comparatively negligible. I do not underestimate the moral value of appearing to have India's whole-hearted support in the war; but from the practical point of view I do not think the Congress in any event are going to do much for us. I think in the light of the provincial conditions which I have sketched in the beginning of this letter, we could face a break without undue apprehension. I am confident that a Congress civil disobedience movement would not succeed, and its failure would gravely weaken the Congress. It

might lead to a very serious split in their ranks which might on a broad view be not without its advantages. We must not in such an event court merely on repression. We must have an active, reasonable and constructive policy, and we must produce the impression that we really believe in that policy and want to see it carried through. I personally would be prepared to go far, but not under the compulsion of Congress. We are deliberately surrendering our power and we ought to do it with a good will; but we must not let the retreat turn into a rout. There are times when we have to stand and fight, even though at the end of it we continue to retire; and I think we may perhaps before long reach such a stage.

Yours sincerely,

112. Recollections of a Congress Ex-Minister

Leader, 6 December 1939

6 December 1939

It has been said that the true test of a pleasure is the memory of it. When he was Premier, one of the subjects on which Rajagopalachariar used to speak frequently was the cordial relations and perfect understanding which existed between the Ministers and the Governor and the services. But from certain observations made by him in the course of a speech at Madras, it appears that Prakasam's recollections of the working of provincial autonomy in respect of the attitude of the officials are not so pleasant. Mr Prakasam referred to the existence of a 46-year old rule, framed by the private secretary to the then Governor, which provided that the secretary would decide which of the files should be disposed of by himself and which might be sent to the Governor. There were not ministers at that time. But it seems that the rule was operating even during the time of the Congress Ministry. It was secretaries who decided which file should be disposed of by whom. Prakasam has been reported to have said: 'Under that rule it was not the ministers who governed but the secretaries. It was revolting for the Congress Ministers to work under such a system but still a certain amount of adaptability was shown and a provincial autonomy was created where there was none in reality'. There were other things Mr Prakasam disliked. When war broke out, without letting the Ministers know and behind their backs, officers who had gone on leave or on leave preparatory to retirement, were called back to service. Regarding the Revenue department of which he was the head, he said that officers came and took charge without his knowledge. We do not propose to discuss here the ex-Minister's grievances. There will be time enough to do that when the Madras Government have also made a statement on the subject. But there are one or two things which deserve notice. We had been told that the Congress leaders accepted office on receiving an assurance that the Governor would not set aside the advice of ministers in regard to their constitutional activities. We do not suggest that the Madras Governor has acted unconstitutionally. We are not expressing any opinion on his action. But since the Ministers felt that the Governor had acted contrary to the assurance given, it is curious that they did not resign.

It also requires to be explained how it is that those ministers who were willing to be 'governed' by secretaries and continued to work under such 'revolting' conditions should regard the status of the self-governing domination not good enough for India. It appears to us that the history of the resignations is yet to be written. Some of the ministers say that they welcome their freedom from office. But others think that the resignations were a mistake. In the course of a speech the other day Mr Satyamurti⁴ said that if India had accepted Gandhi's advice and cooperated with Britain in the prosecution of the war, she could have achieved what she wanted by this time. He confessed that he was not happy over the resignation of the Ministers and claimed that in saying so he

expressed the opinion of the average Congressman. The Forward Bloc, it is true, welcome the resignations. But they do not attribute very patriotic motives to the actions of the Right Wing. 'It is one thing', writes Subhas Bose in his paper, 'to take a plunge and enter a swimming bout, it is quite a different thing to be pushed into the water from behind when the sight of it gives you cold hands and feet'. However, whatever the cause of the resignations, what Prakasam related proves that all Congress leaders are not so self-willed and arrogant as has sometimes been alleged. To demand assurances from the Governor that he would not set aside the advice of ministers in regard to their constitutional activities and then allow themselves to be 'governed' even by secretaries—it is not self-willed and arrogant people who can exhibit such adaptability. Unfortunately there are some who construe the performance of the Madras Ministry as a sign of demoralization of Congressmen. The *Indian Express*, a Congress journal, says: 'It teaches us that the experience of Congress Ministers been ten times as humiliating as they had actually been. They would have swallowed them all under some simulation of principle or another and the public would have known nothing of them while the Congress regime lasted. But for the precipitation of the crisis brought about by the war, the Congress Ministries would undoubtedly have continued for long, undaunted by experiences of the kind recounted by Mr Prakasam, and continual accommodation to insulting forms of treatment would have progressively demoralized the character and mentality of Ministers'. It is unfortunate if it is so. But our contemporary is better acquainted with the Congress leaders than we can claim to be.

¹ Tanguturi Prakasam (1872–1957); popularly known as 'Andhra Kesari' (Lion of Andhra); qualified at the Bar in London and returned to India to set up a lucrative practice; joined the non-cooperation movement and was president of the Madras PCC (1921–34); revenue minister in 1937–39 and chief minister of Madras in 1946–47.

² S. Satyamurti (1919–21); Tamilnad Congress Committee Secretary (1926–36) and its president in 1935–36; secretary of the Tamilnad Swarajya Party (1923–24) and mayor of Madras (1939–40). He was imprisoned in 1931 and 1932; elected to the legislative assembly and remained its member from 1934–43.

113. Viceroy's Review

Linlithgow Papers, Acc. No. 2335, NAI

18 December 1939

No. 107.

Governor-General to Secretary of State.

Telegram R., 18 December 1939

Immediate No. 1865–G. Following is draft Appreciation for Dominions, No. 12 of the 1939 Series:—

The German wireless in various languages, including English and Hindustani, describes India as seething with unrest; rebellion active on the Frontier; labour in violent revolt; repression in full swing; and the Viceroy's train guarded by 'forty men with machine guns' as he leaves Delhi on tour. Wilder misrepresentation could scarcely be imagined. The whole of the Frontier has been quiet except Waziristan where minor incidents continue, such as a skirmish in which three British soldiers were killed; the only other incident of note is the kidnapping of an Indian medical officer. Labour has been more placid than usual; and the only tendency worthy of remark in the towns is some restiveness over a rise in bazaar prices: in Jubbulpore (Central Provinces) this led to a disturbance which the German wireless attributes to machinations of the British Secret Police! The only part of India troubled with serious disorder has been Sind, where the Provincial Ministry is still in office, and the cause is communal: the dispute about a building alleged to have once been

a mosque (see Appreciation No. 10) led to rioting in Sukkur on building the Muslims who had taken wrongful possession of it: violent encounters between Hindus and Muslims then broke out in the town and in neighbouring villages, bad characters made the most of the occasion for dacoity, and a number of persons were murdered before troops and police restored order. The dispute remains for settlement, but all disturbances have now ceased.

The tranquility that has reigned over almost the whole of India is the more remarkable when it is remembered that in eight of the eleven provinces the Ministries, at the bidding of the Working Committee of Congress, have resigned in furtherance of a political agitation aiming at an immediate advance towards independence for India. Mr Gandhi and the other responsible leaders continue to discourage civil disobedience; but there are no signs that any influential section of nationalists is eager to start such a movement, and the general public have regarded the resignations with apathy and some measure of disapproval. In the seven Provinces where the Governors, aided by official Advisers, have assumed all executive and legislative powers, there is little to mark the change except a subsidence of anti-war propaganda. A number of measures which the Legislatures passed on the eve of the Ministerial resignations have received assent, including the United Provinces Tenancy Bill which has long been under discussion. Though in some details Governors have found good reason to stop short of the full programme of their ex-Ministers, there has been no general reversal of policy.

In spite of the political crisis, India has not wavered in denunciation of the enemy in Europe, and has not failed to render all help needed in the prosecution of the war. The men required as recruits for the Army are forthcoming: assistance in money from Princes and others continues to be offered: and a great extension of India's effort in the field of supply is proceeding apace.

Meanwhile the political quarrel has taken on a new phase. On the Congress side a resolution of the Working Committee, passed on 23rd November, summed up the case against the British Government and stated with fresh detail the demand for a 'constituent assembly' to undertake the framing of a new constitution. It is now deliberately claimed that this assembly should be elected on the basis of adult suffrage. In the framing of the constitution the rights of minorities would be 'protected to their satisfaction' and details not settled by agreement would be referred to arbitration. Minorities would be represented in this assembly by members elected by separate electorates, but would not be entitled to 'weightage' beyond their numerical strength. The Congress is alone in favouring an assembly of this sort: and Mr Jinnah, on behalf of the Muslim League, has emphatically rejected it. The constituent assembly, according to him, would be merely another edition of the Congress, and in it the minorities would be powerless to influence the verdict as to the nature and form of the Indian constitution. Taking advantage of the resignation of the Congress Ministries, Mr Jinnah has called on Muslims throughout India to observe Friday, 22nd December, as a day of thanks giving for deliverance from 'the tyranny, oppression and injustice' of the Congress regime in the Provinces. This pronouncement has provoked bitter comment from Congress leaders, and has had the result of preventing the further discussion of communal differences between Mr Jinnah and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru which had been arranged. Mr Jinnah is unrepentant; and, in reply to denials of any Muslim grievances at the hands of Congress Ministries, now claims that the British Government should appoint a Royal Commission of Judges of His Majesty's High Court, under the chairmanship of a Law Lord of the Privy Council, to hold an enquiry into the charges.

Congress leaders, though in the past they have professed willingness to submit the record of the Ministries in their treatment of Muslims to investigation, are loud in denunciation of Mr Jinnah's proposal: and the controversy over it and over the celebration announced for 22nd December has for the time diverted fire from His Majesty's Government.

Mr Gandhi's latest statement, however, returns to 'the problem of the Princes'; and he has permitted himself to say of their treaties with Britain—'Lawyers will no doubt be found who would argue that treaties are solemn pledges which can be enforced by the Princes. How can a dwarf enforce rights against a giant!'. Ends.

114. The Collapse of Sind Ministry

'Congress Party has thrown me to Wolves': Allah Bakhsh's Statement, *Tribune*, 22 December 1939

22 December 1939

Khan Bahadur Allah Bakhsh and Sind Premier, called a conference of about 200 leading Hindus of the Sukkur district for the first time since he has assumed the office in Sind, with a view to place before them the policy and programme of his Government. During the course of his 3 hour long address he narrated the important incidents during his regime and explained the difficulties he had to face during the period of two years that he had been in office.

Recalling the circumstances under which he had formed his Ministry, he stated that had it not been for the support of the Congress Party he could never have entered into office, yet he regretted deeply that the Congress Party after ushering him into office had thrown him to the wolves by withdrawing its support after a short period of six months.

Dilation upon the part playing by the Congress Party the Khan Bahadur stated that their opposition to the present Ministry began with the land assessment revision proposals. In that respect the opposition of the Congress Party, he stated, was not based on the merits of the proposals themselves but on the most unreasonable ground that the Ministry did not consult that Party in this matter, which was, indeed, an executive function of the Government and in which the Ministry was not at all bound to consult any party. Thereafter, too, the Congress Party had been consistently opposing the Ministry, though the Congress knew full well that they had no alternative ministry to offer and that if the present Ministry went out of office, it would be the Muslim League that would capture the power in Sind, which was detrimental not only to the interests of Province but was also against the larger interests of India.

The Muslim League Party, said the Premier, did not exist till the fall of Sir Ghulam Hussain Ministry. The Muslim League Party was formed then with a view to wreak vengeance upon the present Ministry, for the opponents of the present Ministry believed that such an All-India Muslim League had a deeper motive in having their eyes on Sind, for if they captured Sind they will raise the prestige of the Muslim League in All-India politics and before the British Government, and also this should have paved the way to their scheme of Pakistan. It is very strange that though it was the first duty of the Congress to defeat the Muslim League, the Congress Party throughout has been in a way helping the League by raising the hope in the minds of the Leaguers in Sind to overthrow the present Ministry, the inevitable result of which should have been the capture of the Ministry by the Muslim League.

Complaining against the Hindu public and press, the Premier stated that they had also been raising difficulties in the way of the present Ministry. On small matters they raised storms, pressed the members of the Hindu Independent Party to withdraw from the Government and sometimes even to withdraw from the Assembly altogether. Several times the Premier was faced with threats of resignation by the Hindu Ministers under which circumstances it was impossible for the Ministry to function smoothly.

Referring to the Manzilgah issue,¹ he stated, the issue had been raised by disgruntled members in the Assembly who had hoped that by raising this issue they would be successful in making the Ministry unpopular and even breaking it. He deeply regretted that the Hindu public instead of co-operating with the Government and helping it to solve the problem made it all the more difficult by this agitation.

¹ The Muslim League mounted a campaign for the restoration of Masjid Sharif Manzilgah, a domed building in Sukkur. It led to satyagraha and widespread Hindu-Muslim violence in Sukkur and the neighbouring districts. Afterwards an investigation was carried out into the exact nature of the building, and in 1941 it was handed back to the local Muslim community.

115. The Congress Ministries: Impressions of a Congress Sympathizer:
Maulana Muhsin Sajjad¹ to Congress Working Committee,
22 December 1939 (7 Zil Hijj 1358)

In Urdu, AICC Papers, File No. G-42, 1939, NMML

[The typescript of the note is replete with typographical and grammatical errors. The text is reproduced here in full, except at two places where a few lines have been dropped. This is indicated (...). Obvious spelling mistakes have been corrected. Where a word or two are missing, they have been put in parenthesis.]

Dear

I have prepared a note in Urdu for you and for the consideration of other members of the Congress Working Committee. The translation in English is done by a close friend. I hope my views have been adequately conveyed in the English translation. Possibly, some of my ideas have not been effectively communicated, but the thrust of the note will be intelligible. The English translation has been organised for the convenience of other members of the Working Committee. I have sent copies to the Congress President, Dr Rajendra Prasad, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Gandhiji, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad.

This note is an expression of my extremely sincere and serious opinion. And it is my earnest desire that you and the members of the Working Committee should consider it seriously and endeavour to set things right. The mistakes of the past should not be repeated.

The present state of the country has been worsened beyond all hope of redemption. Although the Congress had to face opposition group including Hindus as well Muslims, individuals as well groups, yet the opposition had never been so acute. Since 1920, the present leaders of the League have been opposing (sic) but this opposition was never so severe. Most of the Muslims now entertain a genuine and sincere aversion for the Congress. The leaders of Hindu Mahasabha and Harijans are opposing the Congress so boldly that they had never done before.

It is an imperative call of the time that the responsible leaders of the Congress and the members of the Working Committee should deeply probe into the matter in the light of hard facts, in order to find out the root cause of all the present discontent.

There may be a vast scope of unfounded exaggeration in the charge-sheet levelled against the Congress and the Congress Government, and possibly most of them may have nothing to do with the Congress or the Congress Governments. But as the accusations have received universal acceptance, coupled with a sincere conviction, mere broadcasting explanations and statements on behalf of the Congress and Congress Ministries cannot remove the mist. In order to rectify the situation, the Congress Working Committee must take certain effective measures. If the Congress

aspires to be a national organization representing common interests, and the country's liberty and regeneration have to be achieved through it (and certainly Congress ought to live up to the spirit and the ideal), then it must bestow its sober deliberation over the matter at the earliest possible date.

The Working Committee ought to have thought over it sometime earlier, when it held the Government in eight provinces; being in power it must have been easier for the Congress to meet the general grievances; but even now the problem needs an urgent attention. However baseless the allegations of the Muslim League and the Harijans might appear in the eyes of the Congress High Command and their Press, and whatever might be the real causes of communal tension (and although the Congress Government might not be legally held responsible for all such mischief), the Congress Working Committee which claims to serve the country in right earnest, cannot deny to itself the obligation of making a thorough inquiry into the whole affair through an impartial tribunal to explore the truth and show it a sunshine (sic)....

What is needed most is that responsible leaders of the Congress should be bold enough to plead guilty for such errors which may definitely prove to exist, and should declare their firm determination not to let them recur again. No time should be spent to redress such wrongs. (1) First of all, it deserves special notice that from 1930 to 1933, the Muslim Conference, the Muslim League, the Liberal Federation and some groups had been obstructing the struggle for freedom and every possible effort was spent (sic) to keep the Muslims aloof from the struggle. But it was only through the efforts of the Congressite Muslims, Jamiyat al-ulama² and the Ahrars¹ that the obstructionists could not succeed; and the Congress could successfully pose as the united front of the country. Even Gandhiji could proudly claim at the Round Table Conference that the Congress Working Committee contained five Muslims as an evidence of the fact that the Congress was a Nationalist Party.

An adequate representation of the Muslims was explained on the strength of the very fact that five out of fifteen presented just the right quota of the Muslims. As the struggle was concluded Dr Ansari,⁴ unfortunately passed away. Since then there never had been more than two Muslims in the Working Committee. Out of these two Maulana Abul Kalam Azad is the only distinguished figure whose erudition and thought leadership (sic) has always been an admitted fact, but the other gentleman had indeed been recognized only as a selfless, sincere soldier. But it can hardly be said that he can rightly appreciate the problem as to what ought to be the place of the Muslim in the national programme. There is no other gentleman who might be in a position to understand and realize the feelings of and trends in the Muslim community in the light of the principles of Islam. Indeed the Maulana is the solitary exception; but it would be doing a great hardship (sic) to him and to the community if he by himself alone is called upon to bear the responsibility on behalf of nine crores of Muslims. I can say with definite certainty that this deficiency has been causing great alarm and intense dissatisfaction not only amongst all the Congressite Muslims, but even (among) the members of the All-India Congress Committee (who) have been deeply touched by this bold (sic) blank in the composition of AICC Working Committee. It has been pointed out so many times, but they fight (sic) shy as they may be branded as a communalist to have raised such a question even in the Congress camp.

The other thing is that, since 1930, the Working Committee has always been formed at the instance of Gandhiji and Gandhiji is not prepared to listen to any body. My rejoinder had been that such a plea for not offering protests is quite baseless. In the interest of welfare and solidarity of the Congress, we should always speak the truth. By way of refuting the banter (sic) of communalism, one may reasonably inquire whether nationalism implies that the Congress Working Committee should consist of 13 Hindus and 2 Muslims; if nationalism is something above and beside the question of caste and creed, then why should you not ever have a composition of 13 Muslims who

do not deface nationalism? Why should reverse alternative denationalise the constituent body? One should always be able to reason and it is no good to reason for nothing. And I believe Gandhiji cannot insist to (sic) take an unreasonable stand. (These lines have been retained as in the typescript.)

Such things have always been talked about in private conferences and now the members of the Muslim League openly taunt the Congress for such flagrant irregularities.

However, the master error of the Congress had been that it has scrupulously avoided an adequate representation of the Muslims in the Executive Body at the Centre and in the Provinces. The excuse that Muslims are not available does not stand at all as it cuts at the root of the national character of the Congress and its pretensions to claim the Muslims in its fold is thrown aboard. Every year, nearly one hundred Muslims are elected as members of the All India Council. Are they all worthless? If they are all unworthy, why should not the Congress leaders include such men who may really be good enough? The constitution of the Congress may be made so flexible so that it may conveniently assimilate such men in the Working Committee who have identified themselves with the creed of the Congress and have undergone sufferings or may be ready to make sacrifices for the freedom of the country. The constitution of the Congress cannot be treated as an inspired treatise which can bear no alteration. Principles have to be followed to achieve certain ends, and not that the end may be sacrificed for the sake of a principle.

In short, the defect in the composition of the Working Committee is its colossal blunder (sic) which has generated many a mischief and gross misunderstanding. If not redressed, it may do great harm to the country.

The Congress movement has been gradually growing popular amongst the Muslims in an indirect way. In the year 1936, for the first time, Mr Jinnah decided to contest the general election against the Congress. In the year 1934, on the eve of the election to the Central Assembly, there has already been a contest between the Congress and the Hindu Nationalist Party⁷ on the one hand, on the other, a Muslim Unity Board was formed⁸ which comprised of Congressite and Nationalist Muslims and was supported by the Jamiyat al-ulama. This Unity Board had to contest the election with the obstructionists, who simply opposed the candidates of the Unity Board on the ground that they were Congress-minded Muslims. The election campaign naturally helped to advance the propaganda of the Congress. Most of the candidates of the Unity Board were elected and they were asked to co-operate with the Congress. But after the election, under the influence of Maulana Shaukat Ali,⁹ the Unity Board began to betray reactionary signs and the Jamiyat al-ulama had to secede from the Party. Yet it cannot be denied that the election campaign carried the propaganda of the Congress to the Muslim masses far and wide.

And it is well evident that the Congress was gaining ground amongst the Muslims on account of the support and effort of the Jamiyat-al-ulama and the Nationalist Muslims; consequently, Mr Jinnah for the first time joined the session of Jamiyat al-ulama held at Delhi and spoke highly of the sacrifice of the Jamiyat, as he had to confront the general election of 1936. He met nearly all the leading members of the Jamiyat and explained that he himself was a Nationalist and Independence was his goal. He suggested that if they (members of the Jamiyat) joined him in the League, he would eliminate the reactionary elements. Mr Jinnah was not, then, opposed to Congress as, at the time, the Congress had no fighting programme before it, and had simply to contest the election. But Muslims were not yet aware of the Congress programme, and as the effects of the communal riots of 1932 still lingered in their memory it was not expected that the Muslims candidates would safely return on the Congress ticket. This is a fact which is well-known to all the leaders of Bihar and UP.

In UP the Congress and the Muslim League joined hands in the election campaign; Mr G.B. Pant and Mr Khaliqzaman and Mr Rafi Ahmad Kidwai during the election campaign were on friendly terms. In Bihar, as the Muslim Independent Party had already been formed, the League could not come to the fore. There were two other Muslim parties (United Party and Ahrars), which were avowedly opposed to the Congress and were opposing this Independent Party which had its programme and creed just the same as that of the Congress. Indeed the manifesto of the Independent Party included provisions to safeguard the interests of the Muslims, but its economic and political programme was similar to that of the Congress.

The parties opposed to the Independent Party attempted to poison the electorate with plea that it was really speaking as a Congress party. On the other hand, (the) Jamiat al-ulama and (the) Imarat-i Shariah⁸ supported the Party on the ground that complete Independence as its goal and with a pledge to safeguard the religio(us) interest(s) of the Muslim and amend (sic) to ameliorate the economic and educational backwardness of the country. This move led to the popularity of Congress creed in the Muslim mass(es). It was noteworthy that no candidate was set up by the Independent Party against Dr Syed Mahmud and Mr Sayedul Haque⁹ who were contesting on Congress ticket, but (the) Ahrars and (the) United Party had set up their candidate to oppose them in their constituency. The Independent Party and Imarat-i Shariah entirely and wholeheartedly supported Dr Syed Mahmud and Mr Sayedul Haque. The Independent Party captured most of the Muslim seats and it created a favourable atmosphere for the Congress. The condition in UP (was) nearly the same.

By the friendly relation(s) that prevailed between the Congress and the Muslim Nationalists, particularly (the) Jamiat al-ulama during the election, it was expected that after the election the country would present a united front and will march forward in unison and amity; i.e., the Congress Party and the Nationalist group will tackle the constructive programme jointly.

But as soon as the result of the election returned a distinct majority for the Congress in various province(s), some distinguished leader(s) of the Congress announced that the Congress need not coalesce with any other party. After the election this was the first wrong move which provoked the Muslims against the Congress. And the new blunder was that the Congress invited only the Congress members in the Convention held at Delhi, while to be fair the Congress ought to have invited all the members who belonged to the Nationalist group and had a programme akin to the Assembly programme of the Congress. Had this corporate body decided to demand an assurance from the Governors for accepting the office, it would have created (a favourable) atmosphere from the very start....

I am at least one of those who had offered certain suggestions to Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, but I don't know whether he received the letter or not. It cannot be denied that the victory in (the) election proved so intoxicating that all such salutary suggestions were ignored.

Prior to the convention Mr Jinnah had not pitched himself against the Congress. But the arrogant self-assertion of the Congress Party on the eve of inviting the Convention antagonized even the Muslim supporters of the Congress...

Mr Jinnah, who during the election advocated Independence and denounced the India Act 1935 as a waste-paper¹⁰, took a sudden (sic) change and opposed the day of Demonstration against the India Act to be held on the 1 April 1937. He had to take this undesirable step, as he must have felt sore for not being consulted in the Convention on the question of office-acceptance. Even the President and the Secretary of the Jamiat al-ulama were not consulted, although they were all the while at Delhi.

Had the Congress been liberal enough to take into confidence the leading members of the Nationalist group, the Jamiat al-ulama and Mr Jinnah on the eve of the Convention in order to

chalk out a united programme, the Interim Ministry would not have come into existence and the opposition to Congress would not have grown so acute.

2. The Congress took certain measures which betrayed its narrow-mindedness and exposed its darker complexion to the public view and those who wanted to oppose the Congress made much of it. For the sake of illustration, I may point out (that) Shri Krishna Sinha was made leader of the party. Undoubtedly he is an able man. But it was generally believed that the claim of Dr Syed Mahmud should have been pressed as he happened to be the senior-most and a member of the Working Committee. Moreover, his ability and learning is accepted by all. There can be no two opinions on the point that Dr Syed Mahmud was the fittest person to be the leader of the Party. Although at the time of selecting the leader it was not decided that the office would be accepted, yet it was generally believed that the Congress would take up the office and the leader of the Party will be the Premier of the Cabinet. The election of the leader had taken place on this very assumption. Does it not imply that as Dr Syed Mahmud is not a Hindu, his merits, services and sacrifices do not count? In other words, being a non-Hindu he cannot have a right to be the Premier. This is a lame excuse to say that Dr (Mahmud) had no parliamentary experience, while Shri Krishna Babu had been leader of the Swaraj Party in the Legislative Council. Shri Babu, being a pleader could, without previous experience, lead the Swaraj Party, entering for the first time in the Legislature; but Dr Syed Mahmud being a Bar at-law and Ph.D., and one who had been (in the) High Command of the Congress for a pretty long period of time, could not be thought deserving to be the leader of the Party as it was the first occasion for the Dr to enter the Legislature.

However, the Bihar Congress Committee and the All India Working Committee must have arrived at the conclusion without a predisposition (sic); yet this strikes as something queer and all explanation(s) fail to restore good faith. Every Muslim Congressman or non-Congressman (with the exception of Mr A. Bari¹¹) has attached a significance or importance to the selection of the leader of the party.

3. The other great blunder that the Congress Party committed [prior to office-acceptance and after (the) election of the leader] which deeply offended the feelings of the Muslims, was that the Bihar Assembly failed to nominate even a single Muslim representative in (the) Bihar Council. The election was based on a joint-electorate system. But the Congress could not but select Hindu nominees. Although I had pointed out to Anugrah Babu at the Ragis Hotel that Shah Omair,¹² who is a senior Congress member, must be selected by the Congress, and then I had as well suggested that the Congress and the Independent Party should stand side by side and thus they would be able to nominate eleven members for the Council. But my suggestions were ignored....

4. In the year 1937, from March till July, there was an opportune moment for the Congress leaders and workers to devise means for the solution of the problem of Hindu-Muslim unity, which ultimately might have strengthened the position of the Congress. It was not difficult to bring them closer to the Congress who had already an inclination for it. But this precious moment was wasted in agony and anger for being debarred from office acceptance as the Governors refused to give them assurance of non-intervention. Rather, at the instance of (a) certain raw, inexperienced Muslim worker, some leaders repented that if the Congress had captured all the Muslim(s) it would have abated (sic) the Interim Ministry. But such a picture was quite far from the fact; and why should they fail to comprehend that Interim Ministries were even formed at Orissa and Madras, which had been shaped by Hindu leaders.

But as the opportunity had already slipped, the Congress devised the plan of Muslim Mass Contact¹³ to win over the voters and capture the Muslim seats in future. Undoubtedly, (the) Congress has to establish contact with all the sects and the communities in the best interests of the country

and for achieving Independence. But in launching this scheme, the Congress committed two blunders. Firstly, it was wrongly called Muslim Mass Contact, which led the Muslim leaders to believe that the Congress (was) attempting to alienate the Muslim mass(es) from their true leaders simply to capture their votes. This move of the Congress also provoked the Muslim leaders to oppose the Congress. (The) Congress should not have started Muslim Mass Contact, as there is nothing like Sikh Mass Contact, Christian Mass Contact. It simply developed a deep-rooted aversion for the Congress. From the very beginning, the Congress ought to have exerted (its) best efforts to enroll members from all various communities of the country. If the number of the Muslims was not adequate, the Congress ought to have tried to diagnose the real cause behind it.

The other blunder is this that the movement (Mass Contact) was started just when the Congress had achieved distinct success. Although the Muslims were not set up to contest on Congress ticket, but there were other parties (i.e., the Muslim League and the Independent Party) which contested the election successfully and were not opposed to Congress. The Congress ought to have exerted (its) best efforts to enroll member from all the various communities of the country. If the number of the Muslims was not adequate, the Congress ought to have tried to diagnose the real cause behind it. The political atmosphere was quite good; but incidentally, in the meanwhile, a wordy-war broke out between Mr Jinnah and Pandit Nehru which ultimately came to the Press.¹⁴ Those who were averse to the Congress took advantage of the opportunity and the Mass Contact movement was made a plea for opposition and adverse propaganda.

The pride of election victory, mixed with the anger for not coming to the office from the very beginning, could not let them the Congress leaders think coolly; and some crude and unthinking Muslim workers led them on the wrong side.

Had the Congress exerted to bring about Hindu-Muslim unity within these three months, they could have taken over to their side such parties of UP and Bihar which were already inclined to work on the lines prescribed by the Congress. This should have enhanced the power and prestige of the Congress throughout India. It could have avoided the severe repercussion had the Congress not sacrificed the real objective merely for the sake of fictitious ideologies. The Muslim League could not have developed this antagonism and the atmosphere should not have grown so tense.

5. On accepting the Ministerial portfolio, the Congress committed innumerable blunders and a few of them are given below:

(a) In order to give an impetus to the constructive programme of the Congress, Coalition Ministries must have been formed as had been done in Assam and NWF Provinces.

In UP, in addition to Hafiz Mohammad Ibrahim, Mr Khaliquzzaman, Nawab Ismail Khan should have been taken from the Muslim League Party; and in Bihar in addition to Dr Syed Mahmud, one member of the Independent Party should have been taken in. Had the Orissa Ministry included one Mohammadan, it certainly would have done some good to the Congress. There was no harm in augmenting the number of the Ministries; and in Assam they had to increase the number of the Ministers when accepting the office.

There could be no deviation from any political principle in taking one who had already been in (the) Interim Ministry, or one who had opposed the Congress candidate in the election. For the sake of clarification I may point out that M. Noorul Hasan who had opposed Dr Syed Mahmud was taken in the Congress Party; in the same way there was no harm in including one in Cabinet who was once not in the Congress. If a man of the opposite camp could be embraced in the Party, wherein lay the difficulty in giving him a place in the Cabinet?

This was absolutely a meaningless demand that (the) Muslim member of the Orissa Assembly should first resign his seat and then secure his election on Congress ticket. Such fragile principle proves destructive of the objective.

(b) In Bihar Sir Sultan¹⁵ was already appointed as the Advocate-General, and there was no sense in requesting the Governor to ask for his resignation in order to make room for B. Baldeo Sahay. Sir Sultan could not be tolerated as he was a non-Congressman but how could it be so with the Advocate-General of UP. The other objection could be that he could not have worked on Congress lines, but at least one should have been inquired into it.

Although this is not in itself an important matter, but I can say that the move of the Congress has been ascribed to the communalistic tendency in the Congress.

(c) Four members could be nominated to the Bihar Council; three Non-Muslims including a lady had already been nominated by Mr Yunus¹⁶. The Congress Ministry could still nominate a Mohammeden; but even the fourth one nominated was a Hindu gentleman.

These are such evident things that no explanation can help to remove the stigma of communalism.

(d) In Bihar when (the) Rural Development Department was started, for two long years not (a) single Mohammeden was appointed as an office-bearer. The chief organiser, asst. organiser, and superintendent were all Hindus. Even clerks for long were all of one and the same community. It did a great harm to the prestige of the Congress.

(e) There was a Training Institute attached to the Rural Development Department; but there was no prescribed course of study. Every teacher had to frame his own curriculum under the supervision of the superintendent. This was quite undesirable and such state of things continued till the last day of the Training Institute.

The same things may be said for the Rural Development of the UP as well.

(f) The Congress has not yet accepted the Wardha Scheme of Education. At Haripura session a resolution was passed in the name of National Education which indeed enunciated the same basic principles which have been propounded in the Wardha Report, but the Wardha Report has not been even mentioned in the resolution. In accordance with the resolution, a Board of Education has been formed which would frame a scheme of education on the lines of the basic principles (enunciated in the resolution) and this scheme would be recommended to the various Government and non-Government institutions.

But Bihar and UP started training schools which are usually called Wardha Training Schools; and the Wardha Education Report was the subject of discussion in the Assembly, as if the Government has already accepted the Wardha Report.

This hasty and rash act of the Congress Government caused a great ill-feeling. But the fact stands there that the Congress has not yet defined any scheme. If the Congress Government is at all responsible to the Congress, it should never on their part to have started Training Schools on the basis of Zakir Report,¹⁷ which on some cardinal principles has been objected to by the Muslims. To have started the Training Schools without redressing those objection caused a great alarm and perturbation (sic).

In this matter the Congress Working Committee is much more to blame than the Congress Governments. In spite of hot protests on behalf of the Musalmans, the Working Committee was not moved to take any step to restrain this hasty action of the Government nor could they issue any declaration to the effect.

(g) In the matter of appointments, promotions and transfers, the Congress Governments have committed a series of mistakes, which it is not possible to enumerate. Indeed the Congress Working Committee cannot be aware of all of it; but the Working Committee could have appointed a

Board of Supervision in all the Provinces which should have entertained all such complaints and act accordingly. The Congress Governments must not have been looked upon with suspicion, had the Working Committee taken this step.

(h) For the Library of Rural Development, books worth Rs 15 to 20 thousands were purchased. They were all Hindi books and the number of Urdu books was something like a cypher (sic). All the books were purchased from a Hindi Press and not a single order was placed with any Muslim dealer.

Such things reveal that the Congress body has grown communal-minded.

(i) The Congress Ministries, on their tour to various places, promised to award some money to the various Muslim maktabas and institutions in the year 1938; but the donation remained unpaid till 1939. The Ministry resigned and all their (the Muslims') promises came to naught. It can well be imagined how it must have offended their feelings when they saw with their eyes that the money promised in point of time later in the Hindu institutions were paid up earlier, and the promises held out earlier to the Muslim could not be fulfilled at all. I have received several complaints from Monghyr District, and I know that the complaints are true.

(j) Since the regime of Sri Ganesh Dutt,¹⁸ Muslims have been complaining of some grievances against the District Boards and Municipalities in Bihar. Although the Congress party dominated most of the local bodies, even during the Ministry of Ganesh Dutt, gross injustices were rampant there. All this was ascribed to the dodging of the Ministry, and it was expected that on the advent of the Congress regime all such dirty games would be gone once for all.

On the eve of the election to the local bodies, (the) Muslim League boycotted the contest. Indeed the League wanted to degrade the Congress; but it was high time for the Congress to think and devise ways and means to ameliorate the grievances of the Muslims. The Congress ought to have planned out a formula calculated to do justice to the Muslims. Without making any reasonable changes in the rules of election, the Congress launched the election campaign. Although the Muslim League boycotted, yet the number of Muslim candidates was quite fair. The first mistake of the Congress Committee was that it selected a meagre ratio of Muslim candidates and (the) number of Hindu candidates was overwhelming. The second mistake was that they did not earnestly work for the Muslim candidates as they did for the Hindu candidates. Consequently, most of the Muslim candidates could not return (sic). Indeed in some districts it so happened that even Hindu candidates could not return on Congress tickets, but in most of the districts the Congress came out successful. The third mistake on the part of the Congress Committee was that it failed to compensate the adequate representation of the Muslims by nomination; rather most of the nominees were Hindus. Consequently the Muslims could not be represented in most of the local bodies even in the ratio, as it was during the Ministry of Sir Ganesh Dutt.

Although B. Anugrah Narayan, Minister-in-charge of the local self-government, was warned of it several times by myself and Maulana Azad, that the representation of the Muslims in the local bodies should be larger than the proceeding years and on the whole the ratio of the Muslims members should come up to 25 per cent as it is in the Assembly. What to speak of 25 per cent representation, even in some districts the Muslims could not be represented in the proportion of their population. If the Minister-in-Charge of the local self-government did not like to compensate by nomination, he at least ought to have postponed the election, and until the fresh of election were framed, the old bodies should have continued to function. This might have given the Minister credit of fair play and the Congress should not have been accused of being obsessed with dire communalism.

The other remarkable maneuvering of the Congress Party has been that they are playing to cap the local bodies with Hindus officers. Out of the sixteen districts there is only one district

where a Shia Mohammadan is the Chairman and there are other three Vice-chairman. The same is true of the local boards.

All these things may appear quite petty but this leads to the inevitable conclusion that the Congress is a communalist (sic) to the core. How else can it be explained away?

Maulana Azad and B. Rajendra Pd. are aware of all such things but they do not know how to get out of it.

I understand that the solution is not far. The Working Committee of Bihar should prepare a detailed schedule of all the district boards, municipalities and the local boards, where the Congress party dominates, the numerical representation of the Hindus and Muslims should be specified, and the different offices should be distinctly stated according to the members of either communities. Thus every community will have to realize (sic) his exact position. The Congress party should then be asked to execute the mandate. According to this programme, if a non-Muslim is required to vacate (a seat), a Muslim should be set up. And if certain party may take recourse to open revolt, the party should be banned for ten years. This will indeed strengthen the position of the Congress in the Province and the other Provinces will derive salutary lesson.

I realize that this would eventually offend the feelings of those Hindus who have already been elected either as members or office-bearers. But the Congress shall have to take a bold step if it really wants to stick to justice and truth. The Congress should not shirk the path of rectitude for the personal gain of a few persons.

(6) A few of the blunders committed by the Working Committee are given below:

(a) On assumption of the office by the Congress party, the Muslim League launched the propaganda that Hindu Raj has been established. This propaganda was not opposed either by the Working Committee or the Congress Governments. The Muslims began to believe that as a matter of fact Hindu Raj has been established. There is a Hindu saying—'Sayyan hui kotwal, ab dar kahe ke' (My Lord 's at the helm, there is nothing to fear). In most of the places the Hindus began to tease and harass the Muslims which so often culminated in communal riots. If the Congress Working Committee and the Congress Governments had honestly attempted to defy this nefarious propaganda, much of the mischiefs must not have cropped up. It should be borne in mind that mere statements of certain Ministers that they would sacrifice their lives for the protection of the mosques cannot wash away the feelings of mutual aversion and prejudice. Such statements have so often been promulgated by the English bureaucrats as well. The thing that was needed most was to impress the public in unequivocal terms that the Congress regime is neither Government of the Hindus nor that of the Muslims; it is a democracy and each community has his equal share, and no community can dominate the other.

By the end of 1937, I offered this suggestion but no one paid any heed to it. In the year 1938, at Sadaqat Ashram, I placed a resolution to form a Committee to restore communal amity and to redress the grievances of the Muslims, which was readily accepted but was never been acted upon. The Congress Working Committee did not think worthwhile to ponder over it.

(b) After accepting office, a tremendous agitation was engineered on account of the Vidya Mandir, Wardha Scheme of education, and communal riots. But the Working Committee had no time to think even such matters and did not in the least care how to meet the situation. It turned a deaf ear to all the woes and clamours that were rampant in the country. Yet the Working Committee could not help intervening in the petty question of Bihar-Bengali tangle, and a High Command (sic) (i.e. Rajendra Babu) had to be deputed to solve it. As Subhas Babu was the President, the question caught their notice; but the impervious protestation of the Muslims and the clamour of communities could not still them.

This was a blunder heavier than the Himalayas (Sic).

(c) Jamiyat al-ulama-i-Hind, passed certain unanimous resolutions at Delhi on the 3 March 39 which were addressed to the Congress Working Committee. Some of them related to the complaints which, on inquiry, needed due deliberations to be submitted to the Government for prompt action. Others concerned the Congress session which should not have taken much time to consider. The year 1939 rolled by but the Congress Working Committee did not get time to think over it. How pitiable it is that the Congress Working Committee does not even feel where the shoe pinches.

(d) Jamiyat al-ulama-i-Hind had drafted some important resolutions which the Congress Working Committee ought to have pondered over long before. Had it been done so, when the Congress was in power, it might have pacified the Hindu-Muslim tension. The unity between these two communities depends much on the principles enunciated in these resolutions.

One is the problem of cultural autonomy and the other is the National Education. But the Congress Working Committee does not seem to be serious to take notice of them.

I do not believe that the grievances of the Muslims can be solved only by coalition Ministry and reservation of seats in the Legislature, as the Muslim League might think. This is not enough to solve the tangle. Coalition Ministry, by itself, cannot solve the difficulty which the Muslims have to face. Muslims, in order to protect (their) identity, must get the principles of cultural autonomy recognized as an element of the Constitution of Free India.

This is one of the problems which can bring about a harmony between the Hindus and the Muslims, and which ultimately would pave the way for Independence. This is the objective of the Muslims which they have to acquire at the point of death. To be discreet enough (sic) the Congress Working Committee should endorse it as early as possible.

(e) The Congress Working Committee has recognized Hindustani as the Lingua Franca of the country; and it has been explained by B. Rajendra Prasad as the language spoken in Northern India; by way of illustration the speeches delivered at Delhi on that occasion by Maulana Azad and B. Rajendra Prasad were cited as true specimen of Hindustani. But the Minister of Education, UP and other Congressmen began to oppose it in every possible way. So to say in order to avenge the Hindustani movement of the Congress, the very Congress leaders of the type of Minister of Education UP began to crane (sic) Sanskrit words which they (Muslims) even did not feel quite at home to pronounce, and the same crooked tendency is being imitated in Bihar.

The Congress Working Committee was warned of it in all possible ways but it was not moved. The Working Committee did not like to warn the workers and the leaders not to carry on a campaign of opposition against Hindustani. The Congress workers should not have done anything against the principles which have been evolved in the interest of Hindu-Muslim unity. The slackness on the part of the Congress Working Committee prejudiced the whole of the Muslim community.

For the education of the illiterate masses, a fortnightly paper *Roshni* has been started in Bihar. The language used is very simple, and the same contents are written in both Hindi and Urdu scripts side by side. This paper has been highly appreciated by the public. This has helped in encouraging a simple style and the mass(es) are getting familiar with both the scripts. Indeed a useful piece of work has been started by the Bihar Congress Government.

How strange it sounds that this remarkable piece of work of Dr Syed Mahmud has been denounced in a public meeting in UP! Some Congress Ministers of UP and other Congress workers joined Pandit Malaviya¹⁹ in publicly condemning this act of Dr Syed Mahmud. But the Congress Working Committee did not deem it proper at all to take an action against such disruptive activities.

The Pushtak Bhandar of Darbhanga has published some books in simple Hindustani language for the use of village libraries. The language is simple enough to be easily grasped by Hindus and Muslims alike. At Sokpur Fair (Chatra Mela) a demonstration to make a bonfire of these books was organized, which included a fair portion (sic) of Congress workers. Some of the municipalities

which are dominated by Congress majority have decided to score out these books as they want to introduce and propagate a language, the dominant factor (sic) of which might be Sanskrit. Such news can be read in the columns of English papers. But I do not know whether the Congress leaders or the Congress Working Committee at all intends to put a stop to all such mischievous maneuverings. All such mischief mongering will cease to exist if the Congress Working Committee be inclined to take a disciplinary action against them.

If the Congress, truly speaking, does not want to introduce and propagate a Sanskritised language and intends to encourage Hindustani in right earnest, (which is the common language of Hindus and Muslims of Northern India and which was commonly spoken by all some 20 years ago), the Congress shall have to be stiff in checking all the disruptive forces—one who opposes the Hindustani shall have to be turned out of the Congress fold, may be a Hindu or a Muslim. This is the only remedy to bring about reform.

The Congress had been quite bold in taking disciplinary actions against political offenders; but it is a great blot on the Congress creed of Satya (truth) that it always refrained from taking any disciplinary action against those who had been creating mischief. The Congress should take a firm stand in this respect.

(f) The other great blunder on the part of the Congress had been that it never consults any other important organization on matters which have a constructive or revolutionary bearing on the whole of the nation. For example, the problem of the basic education of the nation is a constructive and revolutionary one. It was not advisable for the Congress to proceed without taking into confidence the educational experts of the various groups. But the Congress did not care for that. Jamia Millia²⁰ is not the only academic center of the Muslims. There were other centers which all along have been progressive. The Congress did not consult even the Dar al-Ulam, Nadwa²¹ or the Dar al-Ulam, Deoband;²² and the Congress should not have ignored the Muslim Educational Conference which all along has been protesting against the old methods of education. The Board of National Education which has been formed by the Congress does not contain any member of the Dar al-Ulam, Nadwa, or the Dar al-Ulam, Deoband.

Does it not arouse a distrust for the Congress? The Congress should try to rectify it as early as possible.

(g) The Congress Working Committee does not take the trouble of examining the doings and the activities of the Provincial and the District Committees. There is no one to look after as to how the influential members are mal-treating the others.

Although I can not claim to have knowledge of the inner working of the Congress, and I do not possess a direct knowledge of the fact as to how the leading members of the Congress Committee are behaving with their workers, yet I do know many of the Muslim workers complaining of the differential treatment meted out to them at the hands of the Congress officers. Consequently most of the workers are sore at heart as they are not treated in the same way as their Hindu fellow-workers. Some of them are keen to engage in the pursuit as they are staunch nationalist and can not but serve their country. They tolerate even disgrace and continue to stick to the job.

I simply like to draw the attention of the responsible leaders of the Congress, in interest of their cause, as for the acquisition of Independence, the existence of a united organization is extremely necessary. And for this very reason, many of the failings of the Congress are being tolerated.

(h) During the Congress Regime, every Congressmen seemed mad after personal gains and prestige; they become prone to do anything fair or foul for the sake of selfish ends. They abandoned the missionary and constructive programme of the Congress. The Congress Working Committee did not make them to come to reason.

(i) The Congress Working Committee used to condemn the communal riots and passed formal resolutions to restore unity and good feelings. Since the Congress accepted office, the Working Committee abandoned this formality.

What else could be the greater misfortune for the country?

(j) While the Nationalist and the Congressite Muslim openly condemn the reactionary and communalist movements of the Muslims, the Hindu leaders of the Congress do not condemn their co-religionists. The Hindu papers which claim to speak for the Congress, do not criticize them at all. Neither Gandhiji nor Panditji ever decry the misleading and inflammatory statements of Mr Savarkar²³ and Dr Moonje,²⁴ Panditji used to criticize them a few years ago; but there seems to be a distinct change in his attitude. This silence is being interpreted as 'something meaningful, and mysterious. Surely enough, this will prove damaging to the rank and file of the Congress.

If I may be in the wrong, you will kindly bring it to my notice that I may make amends.

With my sincere prayers.

Yours sincerely,
Naib-i-Amir-i-Shariat, Bihar
Phulwari Sharif;
President Jamiyat-i-Ulama-i-Bihar

¹ One of the leading ulama of Bihar with a pronounced nationalistic outlook and a fervent commitment to India's independence; a leading figure in the Khilafat and non-cooperation movements and followed in the footsteps of the Deobandi ulama connected with the Jamiyat al ulama i Hindi, arrested during the civil disobedience movement.

² The Jamiyat al-ulama-i-Hind was founded in 1919 during the Khilafat and non-cooperation movements by a group of ulama connected with the Dar al-ulum at Deoband. The Jamiyat followed a nationalist course acting in unison with the Congress. Its leaders were opposed to the 'two nation' theory and rejected the Muslim League's demand for India's partition.

³ The Majlis-i-Ahrar-i Islam, organized in 1929 by a group of Punjabi Muslims who had seceded from the Khilafat communities, was based on the well-to-do peasantry and the lower-middle classes. They expressed something of the old Khilafat movement tradition, an ardent and explicit enthusiasm for Indian freedom. The Ahrars were active in Kashmir where they agitated against the Dogra ruler, Maharaja Hari Singh, to seek redressal of the grievances of the Muslim subjects of that state.

⁴ Mukhtar Ahmad Ansari died in May 1936.

⁵ The Hindu Nationalist Party was established by Malaviya and M.S. Aney in protest against the Congress stand on the Communal Award.

⁶ The Muslim Unity Board was the outcome of a conference at Allahabad in early August 1932 attended by Madan Mohan Malaviya, Nawab Ismail Khan, T.A.K. Sherwani and Khaliquzzaman. The Board set up candidates in the elections to the Central Legislative Assembly, but merged with the Muslim League in 1936.

⁷ Shaukat Ali (1873-1938); born into a family associated with the court of Rampur. His father died while he was seven years old. His mother, Begum Abadi Bano later known as 'Bi Amma', sent Shaukat to Aligarh College in 1888; sub-deputy opium agent till 1912; organized Muslim university fund collections; founded with Abdul Bari and M.H. Kidwai the Anjuman-i Khuddam-i Kaaba, 1913; interned with his younger brother, Mohamed Ali, May 1915 to December 1919; secretary, Central Khilafat Committee till interned with his brother in September 1921; president, Khilafat Conference at Kakinada, 1923; became estranged from Congress after 1923 and campaigned against the Nehru Report; one of the organizers of the All-India Muslim Conference, 1929-31; attended the Round Table Conference, 1931; member, Legislative assembly, 1935. Halide Edib described him as 'a very big man in every sense... He has a flowing beard, a shock of picturesque gray hair, and eyes which twinkle like those of a mischievous boy. His dress is suggestive of the vagueness of his politics. He wears a long shirt over tight Indian trouser and leggings; and a loose Arab Mashlak (mantle) with a Turkish Kalpak (fur cap) in the fashion of about sixteen years ago. His attire is reminiscent of a combination of Indian, Muslim, Arab and Turk; in a word, it is a reflection of Pan-Islamism... In caricatures he is represented as a big baby to whom the king gives a pretty doll so as to keep him quiet'.

⁸ An influential political-cum-religious organization, with a network of educational establishment throughout Bihar.

⁹ On 19 January 1923 Saeedul Haque moved a non-official resolution in the Bihar Legislative Council for the recognition of Urdu as an official language. He also moved a resolution for complete prohibition in Bihar.

¹⁰ Jinnah felt about the 1935 Act precisely the way he had about the White Paper that sired it. At the Muslim League session on 7 March 1936, Jinnah moved the resolution stating his League's 'emphatic protest against forcing the Constitution as embodied in the Government of India Act of 1935, upon the people of India against their will, and in spite of their repeated disapproval and dissent'.

¹¹ Abdul Ban (1882-1947) was actively associated with the nationalist struggle and a key figure in the labour movement in Bihar, joined the non-cooperation movement and was one of the main organizers of various agitational campaigns in Bihar; joined the Independence for India League; founded by Jawaharlal Nehru in November 1928; and the Hindustani Seva Dal, took part in the salt satyagraha in Bihar for which he was sent to jail; chief architect of the socialist party in Bihar and chairman of the reception committee of the All India Socialist Conference held at Patna in 1934; founded the Tata Workers Union in 1936 and advocated the cause of the peasants in the agitation against water tax in Shahabad district.

¹² The reference is probably to Shah Mohammad Umair (1894-1978), a devoted follower of Gandhi, a leading Congress figure in Bihar and an active participant in the 1920-22 and 1930-32 nationalist campaigns, as well as the Quit India Movement.

¹³ The Congress Working Committee meeting, held at Wardha on 27-28 February 1937, discussed the plan of Muslim mass contacts. Jawaharlal Nehru urged provincial Congress committees, on 31 March 1937, to 'make special effort to enroll Muslim Congress members, so that our struggle for freedom may become even more broad-based than it is'. The October 1937 session of Congress lent its approval to Nehru's plan.

¹⁴ See, for example, Nehru to Jinnah, 18 October, 9, 14 and 16 December 1939, *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, vol. 10.

¹⁵ Sultan Ahmed (1880-1963); educated at Gaya and Patna; called to the Bar in 1905; judge of the Patna High Court (1919-20) and vice-chancellor of Patna university (1923-30), member of the Governor's Executive Council (1923) and acting Commerce and Railway member (1937), law member of the Government of India (1941). Knighted by the British Government for his distinguished record as a judge and respected public figure.

¹⁶ Mohammad Yunus (1884-1952); educated in Patna and England; called to the Bar in 1909; attended the Congress session in 1906; elected to the Imperial Legislative Council (1916) and the Bihar and Orissa Council (1921); as leader of the Muslim Independent Party formed a ministry in Bihar and was first premier of the province under the Act of 1935; founded and edited *Patna Times*.

¹⁷ Zakir Hussain (1897-1969), belonged to a Pathan family settled in Qaimganj in the Farrukhabad district; educated in Aligarh and Berlin where he obtained a doctorate in Economics; joined the Jamia Millia Islamia on his return from Germany in February-March 1926 and was its vice-chancellor from 1926 to 1948; also vice-chancellor of the Aligarh Muslim University (1948-56), Governor of Bihar (1957-62); vice-president of India (1962-67); and elected president of the Republic on 9 May 1967. He took charge of Gandhi's Basic National Education Scheme which was launched in 1938, and was president of the Hindustani Talimi Sangh (1938-48).

¹⁸ Ganesh Dutt Singh (1868-1943); educated in Patna and Calcutta; began his professional career in 1898 as a pleader in the Patna district court, selected to the Bihar and Orissa legislative council in 1921 and succeeded Madhusudan Das as Minister for local self government, knighted in 1928, closely associated with various educational projects.

¹⁹ Madan Mohan Malviya (1861-1946), educated in Hindi and Sanskrit at the Dharmjyan Updeshak Pathshala, the English district school and Muir Central College, Allahabad; edited the *Hindustan*, 1887-89; *Indian Union*, 1889-92; *Abhyudaya*, 1902-12, president, Indian National Congress, 1909 and 1918, member Imperial legislative council, 1910-19, founded Banaras Hindu University, 1916, president All India Hindu Mahasabha, 1923-25.

²⁰ The Jamia Millia Islamia (National Muslim University) was founded in October 1920. Among its founders were Mohamed Ali, Dr Ansari and Hakim Ajmal Khan.

²¹ The Nadwat al-ulum was established in 1894 in Lucknow, as a theological seminary by Shibli Nomani (1857-1914), scholar of distinction.

²² The Dar al-ulum came into existence in 1867, and was founded by Mohammad Qasim Nanotawi and Rashid Ahmad Gangohi.

²³ Vinayak Damodar Savarkar (1883-1966); educated in Nasik and the Fergusson College at Poona; left for England in 1906 where he was actively involved in revolutionary activities; spent long years in prison; released in 1924 and was soon thereafter involved in the revival of the Hindu Mahasabha; he conducted a satyagraha campaign in the Nizam's state in 1939.

²⁴ Balkrishna Sheoram Moonje (1872-1948); educated in Hislop College, Nagpur, and Grant Medical College, Bombay, 1894-98; started practice as an eye-specialist in Nagpur, 1901; attended Congress session in 1904, and helped organize the Central Provinces' Conference in 1905; joined 'extremists' after the Surat split in 1907; took part in the Home Rule League; member, Swaraj party, and Responsive Cooperation party and the Hindu Mahasabha; president, All India Hindu Mahasabha, Patna, 16 April 1927; founder of Sangathan and was accused by Muslims of fomenting communal trouble throughout India; closely associated with the Shuddhi movement; bitterly opposed to the Delhi proposals and to any negotiations with Jinnah after the All parties National Convention; represented the Hindu Mahasabha on the Joint Parliamentary Committee (1933).

116. In the Aftermath of Resignation:

G.D. Birla to Mahadev Desai, 29 December 1939

G.D. Birla, *Bapu: A Unique Association*, Vol. 3, Bombay, Bhartiya Vidya Bhavan, 1977, pp. 358-59

My dear Mahadevbhai,

I have been meeting a number of people just now, as Calcutta is humming with all the big guns, I am not writing to you in detail what talk I had with whom. But I have formed a definite impression on the following points:

1. Dominion Status of the Westminster Statute type is assured and could be achieved immediately after the termination of War.
2. During the war period maximum application of this Status could be arranged through the Consultative Committee and by enlargement of the Viceroy's Cabinet and eventually by establishment of Federation with such modifications as we demand.
3. The Communal tension is the greatest stumbling block in our way, but it could be solved on the basis of Coalition Government in UP, Bihar, the Punjab, Bengal and Assam. The basis of Coalition would be agreement on the election manifesto of the majority party and then inclusion of communal representatives in the cabinet duly elected by their co-legislations. Where the minority is below 10 per cent, coalition would not be necessary. Since we can get coalition on substantially our own programme in the Punjab and Bengal, I don't see why we should fear to reciprocate in Bihar and UP. There is no danger, if such coalition is arrived at after thorough discussion about the principles.
4. The question of Defence and princes will have to be settled during the War period. But once we are in the Viceroy's cabinet, the question could be easily settled since the atmosphere would become quite different once we come back. And if these two things are settled between ourselves and HMG, then even before the termination of War, we will have freedom in practice.

Don't you think that in the picture that I have drawn we get all that we need and that we can digest? And don't you think that independence is more or less assured of realization through this process? And if that be so, then why should we create an atmosphere of fight?

Bapu perhaps would be invited to Delhi after some time and I should think that on these lines in would be possible to arrive at a settlement. There seems to be a desire to create coalition even in Bengal before it is done elsewhere by way of gesture so that we may have to reciprocate in other provinces. But since it is known that the Congress is not out to accept office, there is hesitation in making such an offer. It serves the purposes of everyone here by beginning coalition in Bengal first of all because the present Government is such as it is disliked by all except the Muslim League.

Yours sincerely,

Chapter 2. War, Repression and Political Radicalism

I JANUARY–AUGUST 1939

1. India and the War

Extract from an article entitled 'India and Britain's War' by Ram Manohar Lohia, *Searchlight*, 15 January 1939

...People's psychology and morale are the only asset of the Indian freedom movement, but they are perhaps the most important war asset. They are the pre-condition to all other economic, political and military assets. If the Indian People vigorously and steadily refuse to help Britain in her war, no army on earth can compel it to do so. But the refusal of the people must be vigorous and steady and, therefore, the first requirement of the Indian people is an unmixed feeling of opposition to Britain's war.

India must combat such factors as confuse her determined desire of opposition to British wars and weaken her morale. One such factor is the thought of striking a bargain with British imperialism. This is a criminal thought. Whether India receives its complete freedom or only halfway concessions, a bargain in either case will be a crime done to the Indian people and to the world. Freedom to be real must carry no commitments. What use will internal freedom be to the Indian people if it compels them to send their armies to defend the British Empire in Africa or Arabia or Malaya. The Indian people must refuse to think of its freedom in isolation from the rest of the world and, if this freedom carries with it an obligation to uphold the slavery of other peoples it is no freedom at all. There is also the danger that a bargain with British imperialism might not result even in complete internal freedom but only in half way concessions. That will be a betrayal of the Indian freedom movement. The Indian people must remove all thought of bargain from its mind, for such a thought will not only weaken India's opposition to Britain's war but the resulting agreement will either be a betrayal of the Indian freedom movement or a crime upon humanity or both.

Another factor that might make India hesitate in her opposition to Britain's war is the dread of disruptive policies of the Muslim League. Such a dread and hesitation will be the outcome of shaky knees and will bear little relation to the realities in the country. In the event of war it will be impossible even for the Muslim League to dilute the Muslim masses into supporting British war purposes. The Muslim League may, if it so chooses, stage a few minor riots but its capacity for mischief will be strictly limited to that. There is no occasion for shaky knees and we may be sure that, in the blazing furnace of a war, the Indian masses will be cleansed of all contact with disruptive communal tactics.

The Indian people must through their National Congress strengthen their unmixed feeling of opposition to British wars. It matters not which side the British Empire is ranged in the next war; the Indian people must strive for their freedom. Aside from the fact that the first task of the Indian people is to end British occupation of India at the earliest opportunity, it must not be forgotten that the British Empire is the greatest single obstacle to world peace and progress.

In its desire to maintain its rule over one-fourth of the world's population, the British Empire has been a consistent violator of international justice and peace. Twenty years ago, the British Empire burdened Germany with reparations, took away her colonies, demilitarized her and thus contributed to the growth of national reaction among the German people. Today, when Germany is among the world's best-armed powers, it is wooing her and attempting to sell her the freedom of Czechoslovakia.¹ The British Empire has a realist foreign policy, in other words, a policy that sets the seal of accomplishment on every violation of freedom and justice by armed might. In following at the heels of every conqueror the British Empire indeed succeeds in localizing a war and, thus, in postponing the world war. It also confuses men's minds by calling this policy of postponement peace, whereas, in reality each time that this policy succeeds, it adds strength to Fascism and Imperialism and makes for the next world war.

A real peace policy can only be the outcome of a determined peace front of the people which may strike fear into the imperialist aggressors and whatsoever little chance there was and perhaps still is of avoiding a world war is lost through the breaches in this peace front made by British imperialism. The Indian people, more than any other, are in a position to realise that Britain is not a democracy but an Empire, and therefore, in the event of a war, to disrupt this Empire. Once India is free, she will decide how to defend world democracy and justice and, perhaps, her most effective action will be to cease supplying raw materials and suspend all relations with the aggressor,

The biggest asset of the British Empire in India is the Indian Army and the possibility of mobilizing for war the country's enormous man power. India must destroy this asset, and she can do this by blockading the Indian Army from reinforcements in men.

Our anti-recruitment agitation' should be such as to inspire every Indian to refuse military service. Should we succeed in doing that, the Indian Army will be useless as an instrument of British occupation of India. If the Indian people take possession of police outposts, government buildings, posts and telegraphs, railways and heavy industries, the military garrisons even in normal time can only look on helplessly. The Indian Army is perhaps strong enough to cope with a revolt in dozen places but, if there is a simultaneous revolt in all the important towns and villages of the country, it is entirely helpless. In time of War, this helplessness will be greatly magnified...

India's first anti-war duty is the blockade of the Indian Army. Such a blockade will not only give India her freedom but this freedom will be won through a peaceful and non-violent struggle.

The British war-chest must be deprived of its Indian finance. Already the mechanisation of the Army has burdened the Indian people with an additional military expenditure and, in time of War, the country army budget will be vastly increased. The people's second anti-war duty will then be to withhold payment of taxes to the government and to refuse to subscribe to war-loans and other funds.... India's third anti-war duty is to dry up for British war making the reservoir of the Indian States and that can only be done if she encourages the States' people's struggles against their Princes...

That Britain may be deprived of India's raw materials will to some extent depend upon the action of the Indian merchants. More effective and surer will be the strike action of the transport workers on the railways, in the dockyards and elsewhere. India's transport workers can completely stop the shipment of the country's raw materials to Britain and, in refusing to move troops, they

can also set at naught the military strategy of the British Empire. The people's fourth anti-war duty is to prepare the transport workers for strike action....

It is no doubt that the final action for freedom may come not on the morrow of the outbreak of the world war, but sometime later when the Empire in India is weakened through the British concentration on the war fronts. That this final action may at all happen, India must here and now start carrying out her anti-war preparations alike as British imperialism is carrying out its war preparations.

¹ Under pressure exerted by Britain and France, the Czechoslovakian Government accepted, on 21 September 1938, the Anglo-French plan to cede to Germany the areas inhabited by the Sudeten Germans, Sudetenland and nearly five million inhabitants

² The Anu Recruitment agitation was launched to educate the people not to supply men and material to the British Empire in its war efforts

2. India and the War

George Cunningham¹ to Linlithgow, 6 April 1939, Linlithgow Collection, Acc. No. 2210, NAI

Will Your Excellency please refer to your secret and personal letter of 2 April regarding the situation which might arise in this and in other Provinces in the event of an international conflict?

2. The first question is the probable attitude of the present Provincial Government. I think, that if the Congress High Command were to issue a definite order to all Congress Provincial Governments to take any particular line, Dr Khan Sahib and his colleagues would have to fall in with it. If it were to be left in any way to the discretion of the Provincial Governments, I am morally certain that the present Government would continue in power and would carry on the administration loyally. Dr Khan Sahib was certainly in that frame of mind in the crisis of September last.

3. My own feeling is—though, of course, I speak with very limited knowledge—that the Congress High Command having delivered itself of some face-saving pronouncement, will leave it to Provincial Government to decide.

4. If the Congress Government continue in power, I have no particular question, that they would be quite firm in dealing with any trouble across the border, or with any kind of rowdiness inside.

5. If the Congress Government were to resign I think that the probability is that the Muslim League and other parties now forming the opposition will agree to take office if invited to do so; and I assume that I would be bound to give them the invitation. They are at present in a minority of only one or two and I think the different groups might sink their difference to the extent even of getting a majority in the House. I presume that in an event like this there would be no obligation to summon the Assembly except for their normal sessions. So the new Ministers would probably have a considerable period of office before they have to face the House.

In a way I would prefer to proceed to Section 93 straightaway, because I would anticipate more trouble from the Congress Party in the Province if the Muslim League were to be in power than if I had control under Section 93. On the other hand, such action might disgruntle the Muslim League, who include many of the people who are really most friendly to the British connection.

¹ George Cunningham (1888–1963); educated Magdalen College, Oxford; entered Indian Civil Service in 1911; personal-assistant to Chief Commissioner, North-West Frontier Province (1915–19); private secretary to the Viceroy

(1926–31); member of the executive council, North-West Frontier Province (1932–36); foreign and political department, Government of India; Governor of North-West Frontier Province; 1937–46 and 1947–48.

3. India and the War

‘Not an open question’ by Ram Manohar Lohia, *Congress Socialist*, 9 April 1939

9 April 1939

The World War II nearing and it is necessary not only to remind ourselves of our repeated declarations but also to act in accordance with them. Between April 1936 and March 1939¹, the Indian National Congress has held four annual sessions and, at them all the single and uniform declaration of resisting Great Britain during a war-situation, was made.

If four successive sessions of the National Congress declare for a uniform and unchanging policy, it is of deciding importance. During the intervals of these four sessions, many events and varied combinations in world-politics have taken place, the world-situation has often changed and there was abundant time to reach at an unhurried and ripe estimate of the strength of our nationalist forces. We have deliberated upon our duty and measured it with our strength and have declared for resistance to the British Empire.

A resume of arguments culled from the four Congress resolutions, shows that in whatever war-situation, the National Congress has decided to resist attempts of Great Britain to involve India in a war. These arguments have recurred. 1. India cannot join any war without the express consent of her people. The British Cabinet will not be allowed to decide India's fate. 2. We cannot permit our manpower and resources to be exploited for the purpose of British Imperialism. 3. British foreign policy has consistently aided the fascist power and helped in the destruction of democratic countries. Britain has helped in the drift to imperialist world war and must be held responsible for the present collapse of international morality and for the world war when it breaks out. 4. The Congress is opposed to imperialism and fascism alike and is convinced that world peace and progress required the ending of both of these. 5. Free India will stand for disarmament and collective security. These arguments taken together are entirely finally convincing. They contain the answer to the question as to what happens if Britain fights Hitler or Japan. India's duty in either case is clear, whether Britain is on the side of fascism or against it. India must resist the British Empire and sever her connection from it.

Congress resolutions have indicated the various forms in which resistance is to be expressed and organised from now on. No utilization of India's man-power, no voting of credits, no war loans and subscription, no war-preparations such as maneuvers and air-raid precautions.

The voice of the Congress is clear and unmistakable and it was on the point of being transformed into action during the September, 1938 crisis on Czechoslovakia. Mahatma Gandhi wrote on October 8, 1938, that in the event of a world war taking place, the Working Committee had almost come to the conclusion that it would deny itself the opportunity of striking a bargain with England but would make its contributions to world peace, to the defence of Czechoslovakia and to India's freedom by declaring to the world by its action, that the way to peace with honour did not lie through the mutual slaughter of the innocents, but that it lay only and truly through practice of organised non-violence, even unto death. In political action, it is hard to find a noble sentiment on a sounder strategy. It was therefore with no small amazement that one found Mahatmaji refusing to repeat on 23rd March 1939 what he had said six months earlier². Interviewed by an American Press-Correspondent³ as to what advice he would give the Congress should the Paramount Power become involved in a European War. Gandhiji said that the question was too difficult to answer. What could have happened in these six months to throw into doubt the principles of peace and

freedom which Gandhiji had earlier so clearly laid down. His statement after the Czechoslovakian crisis had dared a vision in which India was to resist even unto death the efforts of England to involve her in a war and to refuse to buy her freedom by selling her conscience.

There may be weaknesses in the Congress. Gandhiji may even have doubted that his attitude of absolute resistance to England will meet with general approval. None on these arguments however, justifies any change in or weakening of our war-policy. There is nevertheless a ray of hope. In the course of the interview with the American Correspondent, Mahatma Gandhi proposed simultaneous disarmament for all such nations as wish to resist Hitler.⁴ A man who could make such a proposal for unilateral disarmament will surely not permit the use of his country's manpower by the British War machine. Even so, the least little hesitancy or doubt that Mahatmaji expresses gives rise to serious misgivings about the future.

As an interpreter of Congress resolutions and particularly, those of foreign policy, and war, the position of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru is unique. He has made the country think on the danger of war and breathed in us the spirit of determined resistance to Britain. And yet on 27th September 1938 Pandit Nehru said, 'it is we who will decide, not the British Government, our decision will depend not on promises but on definite action which takes us to our goal'.⁵ This statement released a train of doubts and questions and they were not set at rest by his repetition on 23rd March 1939 that 'India's participation in any war must be decided and governed by the people of India themselves.' These statements not unnaturally made men think that the Congress policy in regard to British wars was still an open question. Newspapers headlined them as 'India's term for settlement.' Incidentally, the Congress President, Sri Subhas Chandra Bose, expressed like views when he said on 30th September 1938 that the 'first and the foremost consideration that they (Working Committee) would keep in view was that they would not commit themselves to a course of action that might strengthen the forces of imperialism. Secondly they would use the opportunity for furthering India's cause for freedom.'

Our policy in regard to war is not an open question. It has already been decided and the decision has been finally expressed in successive resolutions of the Congress. India must resist Britain. There is not even a remote hint that this decision is not final. The grounds on which this decision has been taken have lasted and will continue to last not only until India has severed the British connection but also until destruction of the world imperialist system and abolition of armaments have been made possible. The 'definite action which takes us to our goal' cannot thus be the subject of talks between India and England, unless of course British Imperialism in its entirety feels generous impulse to commit suicide. To suggest therefore, that India's participation must be decided by the people of India themselves and to stop at that is to slide back one step from the Congress resolve which is that the people of India have already decided not to participate in any war.

Any policy other than that of unhedged resistance to Britain is improper both from the view point of aim and of tactics. Any suggestion that a settlement between India and England is possible for the allied waging of a war introduces a double confusion of aim. Firstly, it reconciles us to the idea of partial freedom for India, for it is obvious that a war-settlement cannot go beyond that. Secondly, it makes us allies of imperialism outside in the world in the fond hope of realizing a partial destruction of imperialism within India. We begin to reinterpret and reduce our aim of alliance with world progressive forces to a war-treaty with Britain. Suggestions of a war-treaty with Britain are also unsound tactics in-so-far as they confuse the nation's mind and weaken its determination. Instead of preparing to resist, the nation begins to argue about the many possibilities of a war-situation and when a struggle with Britain may take place and when not mental luxury replaces action.

The British are drawing their net around us. They are making war preparations and have already mechanized a section of the Indian army and are ensuring fresh supplies of man-power and war-materials. Our war-preparations are still in abeyance. There is no sight of a national campaign against recruitment nor for cessation of war-supplies. The world-war is a near-event and we cannot afford to mark time. India must prepare to resist British efforts to involve her in a war for her own freedom, for the freedom of the world and for vindication of the non-violent method.

¹ The sessions were held at Lucknow on 12-14 April 1936, at Faizpur on 27-28 December of that day, at Haripura on 19-21 February 1939, and at Tripuri on 10-12 March 1939.

² For the text, see *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, vol. 67, pp. 413-15.

³ F.E. Birchell represented the *New York Times*, His interview, reported by Reuters, was published on 23 March.

⁴ For the text, see *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, vol. 69, pp. 76-77.

⁵ The statement was published in the *Hindustan Times*, 27 September 1938. See also *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, vol. 9, pp. 159-60.

Enclosure-1

War Danger

(Lucknow Session—April 1936)

The Congress, at its session held in Madras in 1927, drew the attention of the country to the danger of imperialist war and possibility of India being made a tool in such a conflict for imperialist purposes, and declared the right of the Indian people to refuse to participate in any such war without their expressed permission. That danger has become more evident and urgent since then with the growth of fascist dictatorships, the Italian attack on Abyssinia, the continuing Japanese aggression in North China and Mongolia, the rivalries and conflicts of the great imperialist powers, and the feverish growth of armaments, and vast and terrible war threatens the world. In such a war an attempt will inevitably be made to drag in and exploit India to her manifest disadvantage and for the benefit of British imperialism. The Congress therefore reiterates its old resolve and warns the people of the country against this danger, and declares its opposition to the participation of India in any imperialist war.

War Danger

(Faizpur Session—December 1936)

The Congress has drawn repeated attention in the past to the danger of imperialist war and has declared that India can be no party to it. Since the last session of the Congress the crisis has deepened and fascist aggression has increased, the fascist powers forming alliances and grouping themselves together for war with the intention of dominating Europe and the world and crushing political and social freedom. The Congress is fully conscious of the necessity of facing this world menace in cooperation with the progressive nations and peoples of the world, and especially with those peoples who are dominated over and exploited by imperialism and fascism. In the event of such a world war taking place there is grave danger of Indian manpower and resources being utilised for the purposes of British imperialism, and it is therefore necessary for the Congress to warn the country again against this and prepare it to resist such exploitation of India and her people. No credits must be voted for such a war and voluntary subscriptions and war loans must not be supported and all other war preparations resisted.

War Danger and Foreign Policy (Haripura Session—February 1938)

In view of the grave danger of widespread and devastating war which overshadows the world, the Congress desires to state afresh the policy of the Indian people in regard to foreign relations and war.

The people of India desire to live in peace and friendship with their neighbours and with all other countries, and for this purpose wish to remove all causes of conflict between them. Striving for their own freedom and independence as a nation, they desire to respect the freedom of others, and to build up their strength on the basis of international cooperation and goodwill. Such cooperation must be founded on a world order and a free India will gladly associate itself with such an order, and stand for disarmament and collective security. But world cooperation is impossible of achievement so long as the roots of international conflict remain and one nation dominates over another and imperialism holds sway. In order, therefore, to establish world peace on an enduring basis, imperialism and the exploitation of one people by another must end.

During the past few years there has been a rapid and deplorable deterioration in international relations, fascist aggression has increased and an unabashed defiance of international obligations has become the avowed policy of fascist powers. British foreign policy, in spite of its evasions and indecisions, has consistently supported the fascist powers in Germany, Spain and the Far East, and must therefore largely shoulder the responsibility for the progressive deterioration of the world situation. That policy still seeks an arrangement with Nazi Germany and has developed closer relations with Rebel Spain. It is helping in the draft to imperialist world war.

India can be no party to such an imperialist war and will not permit her manpower and resources to be exploited in the interests of British imperialism. Nor can India join any war without the express consent of her people. The Congress, therefore, entirely disapproves of war preparations being made in India and large-scale manoeuvres and air-raid precautions by which it has been sought to spread an atmosphere of approaching war in India. In the event of an attempt being made to involve India in a war, this will be resisted.

Foreign Policy (Tripuri Session—March 1939)

The Congress records its entire disapproval of British foreign policy culminating in the Munich Pact, the Anglo-Italian Agreement and the recognition of Rebel Spain. This policy has been one of deliberate betrayal of democracy, repeated breach of pledges, the ending of the system of collective security and cooperation with governments which are avowed enemies of democracy and freedom. As a result of this policy, the world is being reduced to a state of international anarchy where brutal violence triumphs and flourishes unchecked and decides the fate of nations, and in the name of peace stupendous preparations are being made for the most terrible wars. International morality has sunk so low in Central and South-Western Europe that the world has witnessed with horror the organised terrorism of the Nazi Government against people of the Jewish race and the continuous bombing from the air by rebel forces of cities and civilian inhabitants and helpless refugees.

The Congress dissociates itself entirely from British foreign policy which has consistently aided the fascist Powers and helped in the destruction of democratic countries. The Congress is opposed to imperialism and fascism alike and is convinced that world peace and progress require the ending of both of these. In the opinion of the Congress, it is urgently necessary for India to direct

her own foreign policy as an independent nation, thereby keeping aloof from both imperialism and fascism, and pursuing her path of peace and freedom.

The National Demand

(Tripuri Session—March 1939)

The Congress has for more than half a century striven for the advancement of the people of India and has represented the urge of the Indian people towards freedom and self-expression. During the past twenty years it has engaged itself on behalf of the masses of the country in struggle and disciplined sacrifice of the people. It has carried the nation a long way to the independence that is its objective. With the growing strength of the people, it has adapted itself to a changing and developing situation, and while pursuing various programmes, it has ever worked for the independence of India and the establishment of a democratic state in the country. Rejecting the Government of India Act and with the full determination to end it, it decided to take advantage of the measure of provincial autonomy that the Act provided, restricted and circumscribed as it was, in order to strengthen the national movement and to give such relief to the masses as was possible under the circumstances. To the Federal part of the Act the Congress declared its uncompromising opposition and its determination to resist its imposition.

The Congress declares afresh its solemn resolve to achieve independence for the nation and to have a Constitution framed for a free India through a Constituent Assembly elected by the people on the basis of adult franchise and without any interference by a foreign authority. No other Constitution or attempted solution of the problem can be accepted by the Indian people.

The Congress is of opinion that in view of the situation in India, the organised strength of the national movement, the remarkable growth of consciousness of the masses, the new awakening among the people of the States, as well as the rapid development of the world situation, the principle of self-determination must now be applied to the fullest extent to India so that the people of India might establish an independent democratic state by means of a Constituent Assembly. Not only the inherent right and dignity of the people demand this full freedom, but also the economic and other problems which press insistently on the masses, cannot find solution nor can India get rid of her poverty and keep pace with modern progress, unless her people have full opportunities of self-development and growth which independence alone can give. Provincial autonomy affords no such scope for development and its capacity for good is being rapidly exhausted; the proposed Federation strangles India still further and will not be accepted. The Congress is therefore firmly of opinion that this whole Government of India Act must give place to a Constitution of a free India made by the people themselves.

An independent and democratic India will face the solution of her great problems rapidly and effectively and will line herself with the progressive peoples of the world and thus aid the cause of democracy and freedom.

With a view to a speedy realisation of the Congress objective and in order to face effectively the national and international crises that loom ahead and prepare the country for a nation-wide struggle, this Congress calls upon all parts of the Congress organisation, the Congress Provincial Governments and the people generally, to work to this end by promoting unity and seeking to eliminate disruptive forces and conditions which lead to communal conflicts and national disunity, by legislative, and by strengthening the organisation so as to make it a still more effective organ of the people's will.

War Danger and Amendment of the India Act (AICC, Calcutta—April 1939)

In view of the imminent danger of international war, the AICC reminds the country and all others concerned of the national policy in regard to war which the Congress has often proclaimed. This policy will be strictly adhered to and the Congress is determined to oppose all attempts to impose a war on India and use Indian resources in a war without the consent of the Indian people.

The Committee has noted with disapproval the dispatch of a small body of Indian troops towards Aden as this can only mean their employment for British imperialist purposes.

The Committee, in particular, records its complete disapproval of the attempt being made by the British Government to amend the Government of India Act with a view to concentrating all power, in the event of a war emergency, in the hands of the Central Government which functions completely as an agent of British imperialism. While the Congress is not interested as a rule in amendments to the India Act and has worked for the whole Act to be ended, it cannot tolerate an amendment which strikes at the very basis of provincial autonomy and reduce it to a farce in case of war; which in effect creates a war dictatorship of the Central Government in India, and which makes Provincial Governments helpless agents of imperialism. Any attempt to impose such an amendment on India must and will be resisted in every way open to the Congress. Provincial Governments are warned to be ready to carry out the policy in this respect as may be determined by the AICC or the Working Committee as the case may be.

4. India and the War

Subhas Bose to Prime Minister (all Congress Prime Ministers), 19 April 1939, Rajendra Prasad Papers, F. No 2, C-39, NAI

My dear Prime Minister,

In my letter of yesterday¹ I referred to the general attitude of the Congress towards an Imperialist war, as defined by the resolutions of the Congress. In connection with this problem it is necessary to refer in particular to our attitude towards the Amending Bill now before the British Parliament. I feel that it is necessary to tell His Excellency the Governor and, through him, the British Government as early as possible what the attitude of the Congress and of Congress governments will be in the event of the Amending Bill now before the British Parliament being passed and being put into operation. You are no doubt fully aware of the full importance and significance of this Amending Bill.² The Principal cause in the Bill arms the Central Government with executive powers in the domain of provincial affairs in the event of a war-emergency arising. This is undoubtedly a serious inroad into the present limited powers of the provincial governments. During war time almost every activity of the government is influenced by war considerations and in all these matters, the Central government will have power to intervene, under the provisions of the Amending Bill. Provincial Autonomy will in that event be reduced to a farce.

It is desirable and necessary for you to inform the British government as early as possible through the proper channel that this new legislation will be resisted by us (non-violently of course) even if such a course leads to a conflict.

I am enclosing herewith for your information a letter of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru addressed to the Prime Minister of UP which has my full approval. Obviously we must follow a uniform policy in all the Congress provinces on such an all-important issues like this. The British government should be told clearly and unambiguously that any interference by the Government of India in Provincial Autonomy will be resisted, even if it leads to a major crisis or conflict.

I am also enclosing for your information a copy of the statement I issued yesterday appealing for the observance of an all India Anti-war Day on the 23rd April, 1939.¹

Yours sincerely,
Subhas C. Bose.

¹ Bose had stated the following in his letter of 18 April: 'The attitude of the Indian National Congress in the event of war breaking out has been clearly defined in two annual sessions of the Congress. That attitude is one of non-participation. Indians will be no party to an imperialist war and will not permit her man power and resources to be exploited in the interests of British imperialism. If in such a crisis, an attempt is made to exploit India and her people for war-purpose or to involve India in that war, the attempt will be resisted non-violently. What detailed measures will be adopted by the Congress in executing its policy of non-participation will depend on the circumstances prevailing at the time and on the attitude of the British Government. . '

² A bill to amend certain sections of the Act of 1935 was introduced in the House of Lords on 5 April. One of the amendments was the addition of clause 126A which empowered the central government to direct legislative and administrative affairs in the provinces in a war-emergency. In such an emergency, the Viceroy was to assume supreme authority bringing to an end the autonomy of the provinces. The *Congress Socialist* of 16 April 1939, wrote an editorial Clip, 'The then end of the war wedge' on the Amending Bill. Nehru had observed on 25 April: 'We have drawn attention to the challenge of the Government of India Act Amending Bill, recently introduced in the British House of Lords. Probably this will have a swift passage through both Houses in England and will become law. What does this mean? It is not only a challenge to the very conception of provincial autonomy, it is also the first and a far-reaching step towards committing India to war. It is an attempt to mobilize Indian resources for war purposes without India's consent. It is a complete challenge to the war resistance resolution of the Congress'. Again, while moving the resolution on war danger at the AICC session on 1 May 1939, Jawaharlal Nehru observed: 'The principal question is the power that will be given to the central government by this Amending Bill in case of a war emergency. This question, therefore, demands our greatest attention. Again, think of the war emergency legislation taking place in England. There has been a fair amount of criticism in India of this amendment, but its significance has not been fully realised by our people or even by the Congressmen in the country. This amendment, introduced in the House of Lords, places us at a disadvantage. If we peacefully submit to it, it means nullifying the policy of the Congress which it has adopted since 1928 regarding the participation in war. The amendment, if passed, will put an end to provincial autonomy, which was introduced two years ago.'

³ Announcing that 23 April be observed throughout India as 'Anti-War Day', the Congress President, in a press statement appealed to all sections of the Indian people, to join in anti-war meetings and demonstrations on that date. He said that the Amending Bill was to make India safe for an imperialist war by empowering the Central Government to rob the Provincial Governments of their normal and legitimate powers and functions in the event of a war emergency arising at any time. Bose re-affirmed the policy of non-participation in an imperialist war and expressed the Congress' solemn resolve to non-violently resist any attempt to involve India in such war or exploit India's manpower or natural resources for war purposes.

5. Bose and the War

Arthur Moore¹ to Laithwaite, ² 27 April 1939, Linlithgow Papers, Acc. No. 2319, NAI

Subhas Bose came and we had a long discussion on how to heal the split with Gandhi and what to do if War comes. I analysed the position this way:

- (1) Gandhi won't agree to take advantage of Britain's difficulties or to 'ultimatums' on Jalpaiguri lines.³
- (2) No non-co-operation campaign could succeed unless he sponsored it.
- (3) Ordinary public opinion is overwhelmingly anti-Hitler and Mussolini, and would interpret such action in its simplest terms as assistance to the enemy. It could only hope to be a movement of extreme revolutionaries.
- (4) In war time governments have to be ruthless and such a movement would be crushed at once with the utmost sternness, having achieved nothing, but possibly set back self-Government quite a lot.

(5) He must either find a common basis with the Mahatma or resign now.

He did not query this analysis, except No. 2. He thought it was possible that a movement might succeed without Gandhi's backing, Gandhi was old and very tired. However he did not contemplate defying Gandhi, did not think Gandhi wanted him to resign, and hoped this week when they met they would find a basis of agreement.

We then discussed a war programme as a basis first for reconciliation between Gandhi and Bose, i.e., to heal up the Congress split, second for a truce with the Muslims, third for friendship with Britain and a great advance towards self-government.

He is attracted by it as a solution of his own difficulties, but doubtful if Britain would play. He sees no sign of its having been considered, thinks the new war emergency act is ominous, and has been told that Parliament won't be prepared to consider further reforms for a long time....

Viceroy becomes essential, and what counts are allies. Government will do anything in reason for their friends. But they must be real friends wanting victory in the same causes and with their interests bound up in that victory. Britain was already pretty sure of ordinary public opinion in India. If political India threw in its lot whole heartedly, I felt sure there would be little disposition to refuse power. The Muslims are at present also badly split on several issues. Jinnah will be unable to hold either the martial classes, or Sikander or the leading Muslims of Bengal to a policy of embarrassing Britain and encouraging the enemy, if he attempts it. But heal the splits and join with Britain and much can be done. Things that would not be looked at in peace time, or might take 20 years, went through with ease in war time.

We then discussed various points as the basis of an all round War agreement:

- (1) Direct election instead of indirect for the Federal Legislature. Federation to go through as rapidly as possible.
- (2) The Federal Government to have responsibility for external affairs but the viceroy to be his own External Affairs Minister for the period of the war.
- (3) The Viceroy to be Federal Minister on a basis of Cabinet consultation in matters concerning Paramountcy.
- (4) The Federal Cabinet to have *de facto* responsibility for India's defence, subject to participation on the same basis as the self-governing dominions in scheme for the coordinating of war efforts and Empire defence.
- (5) If any Provincial elections are held during the war, then the present Communal Award will continue in operation for those elections. But the Federal Government (not the British Parliament) will appoint a Commission to hear evidence from Provincial governments and Legislatures, and to recommend if possible communal settlement to be given effect to, later.

Subhas said that he would, this week, discuss these ideas with Gandhi and Nehru and later let me know results. If they could reach any agreement the next move would be either to approach the Muslim League and if successful, then the Viceroy, or possibly the other way about.

He enquired closely whether I had any reason to suppose the British were at all prepared for such things or thinking about them. I said of course I had not, but it stood to reason that although only one Cabinet Minister in London might be reflecting already, the Viceroy here must continually be occupied with the question. Subhas said that he felt that they would do nothing unless and until War actually broke. I said that was probably so, but it was essential to get something in train now and let the Viceroy know. Otherwise if they allowed M.N. Roy to go on talking sedition,⁴ and sometimes skirted it themselves, and there was no sign of something much better coming, the

authorities at home might feel bound to insist on stern precautions, which would spoil the prospect and create a situation hard to retrieve during the war.

It is for this main reason that I think it important that His Excellency should know of this discussion...

¹ Arthur W. Moore (b. 1880); special correspondent of *The Times*, for young Turk revolution, 1902; Russian correspondent, 1913; Spain, 1914; Middle Eastern Correspondent, 1919-22; editor of the *Statesman*, 1933-43.

² John Gilbert Laithwaite (b. 1894); educated at Trinity College, Oxford; appointed to India Office, 1919; specially attached to the British Prime Minister for the Second Round Table Conference; Private Secretary to Viceroy, and secretary to governor-general from 1937 to 1943.

³ At the 36th session of the Bengal Provincial political conference at Jalpaiguri on 4-5 February, Bose issued an ultimatum that a period of six months should be fixed within which the British Government would be expected to give a categorical reply to India's national demand of independence. If the reply was unsatisfactory, the Congress was to take necessary steps in order to enforce the national demand.

⁴ For example, speech at the Chittagong Youth Conference on 27 March urging the formation of a nationalist militia and the forging of unity of leftist forces in the Congress to build a national front to achieve freedom.

6. Nehru on the Congress and War Danger

Speech at the AICC session in Calcutta on 1 May 1939 while moving the resolution on war danger, *SWJN*, Vol. 9, pp. 300-01

1 May 1939

The President Subhas Chandra Bose, should have moved this resolution in the House, but as he is absent, I have to move it.¹ It is a matter of great danger to the country, and the AICC has moved such a resolution many a time. It has proclaimed twice or thrice its determined policy on war, and attempts have been made to renew the policy. There is nothing new in this resolution. We have said that we shall fight against the imposition of any law that seeks to exploit the resources of India. I am not saying anything that is not in consonance with the Congress policy. Every Congress government must act according to the resolution. There has been organised effort against the possible imposition of federation. I have sometimes ventured to say that this question of federation is not a live question. But I don't believe that it is a dead question. Yet, there are other vital questions before us today to be solved in addition to the question of federation.

The principal question is the power that will be given to the central government by this amending bill in case of a war emergency. This question, therefore, demands our greatest attention. Again, think of the war emergency legislation taking place in England. There has been a fair amount of criticism in India of this amendment, but its significance has not been fully realised by our people or even by the Congressmen in the country. The amendment, introduced in the House of Lords, places us at a disadvantage. If we peacefully submit to it. It means nullifying the policy of the Congress which it has adopted since 1928 regarding the participation in war. The amendment, if passed, will put an end to provincial autonomy, which was introduced two years ago.

If there is war there might be a constitutional crisis, which might end all constitutions. It means going afresh into the whole question of continuance in office and therefore this question is a very important and very vital one. This resolution is not a mere repetition of the war resolutions which has come before the House earlier. Some people are of opinion that the Congress governments must resign. I want them to fight without resigning. We must consider the situation as it arises from day to day. I think they must fight without resigning.

The amending bill has now passed only second reading in the House of Lords. It may come before the House of Commons in a few months. You may have to face war danger and war

emergency. This is no more an academic question. We have to think in terms of an emergency which may come about. I would like you to think of the present position in India in its true perspective and resist the bill with all your might. In this connection, I would like to repeat the hackneyed saying: 'If we do not hang together we hang separately.'

The resolution stated that the Congress was determined to oppose all attempts to impose a war or exploit the resources of India without the consent of the Indian people. It also recorded its 'complete disapproval of the attempt being made by the British Government to amend the Government of India Act with a view to concentrating all power, in the event of a war emergency, in the hands of the central government which functions completely as an agent of British imperialism.

7. World War and India

Editorial, *Aaj* (Hindi Daily, Kanpur), 7 May 1939

7 May 1939

Reports from Europe show that the possibility of a World War is increasing day by day. The inspection of the Italian army by German commanders in Libya and holding consultations with Mussolini cannot be ignored.¹ Not only this, the German Foreign Minister, Herr Ribbentrop,² has also gone to Rome. European political scientists feel that Germany wants to create some disturbance in East Europe and is seeking Italy's support in this connection. If all this is true, then it will have to be accepted that a World War can break out in Europe at any moment. In that event, Britain cannot stand aloof, and the moment Britain declares war, India too would get legally involved and exploitation of Indian men and resources will become inevitable. In this situation, it is imperative that we recognise where our duty lies. It is essential for our survival that we are no longer tied to Britain's tail. Britain declares war and we get pulled in. Britain's enemies become our enemies and its allies will have to be befriended by us. This is an intolerable situation. We do not say for a moment that we shall not support Britain. We do not even say that we will go into Britain's enemy's camp. But we do wish to say, and with the greatest emphasis, that we should have the right to extend cooperation or withhold it. We cannot continue to tolerate a situation where the British Government and the British Parliament take a unilateral decision and we are forced to face the consequences.

These manoeuvres resulted in the 'Pact of Steel' between Italy and Germany on 22 May 1939. This was a pact of friendship and mutual aid.

¹ Joachim von Ribbentrop (1893-1946); German diplomat who served during the First World War and conducted negotiations between Hitler and the German Government, in 1930; identified with Hitler and aided in organising the Nazi Government in 1933, Ambassador to Great Britain from 1936 to 1938, minister of Foreign Affairs (1938-45) and negotiator of the Anglo-German Naval agreement in 1935, the German-Japanese anti-commitment agreement in 1936, and the Russo-German non-Aggression Pact in 1939.

8. Nehru on Congress Policy

Interview to the Press, Calcutta, 2 May 1939, *SWJN*, Vol. 9, pp. 301-03

2 May 1939

A certain seeming contradiction arises in regard to our policy towards war. On the one hand, we are anti-fascist and we think that a fascist victory will not only be disastrous for the world as a whole, but also bad for our own freedom. Therefore, inevitably, we do not want a fascist victory.

On the other hand, to support British imperialism is obviously a wrong policy, for the country is dominated by that imperialism.¹ The contradiction does not really lie in our policy, but in the circumstances themselves.

If we think of the question in terms of a free India, obviously we are led to the conclusion that we should support the forces of democracy as opposed to the forces of fascism. If we think in terms of a subject India, we are led to the conclusion that we cannot support imperialism that dominates her. The conflict is resolved when the subjection is removed and a free India can choose its own policy in regard to war as well as other matters.

Then, again, even apart from this, to say that the present British Government is a champion of democracy is not true. If it was in favour of real democracy, its first function should be to introduce democracy in its empire. The mere fact of its not doing so—in fact the British Government is resisting it—is sufficient evidence that it is not the democracy that it seems to be. Further, the present British Government is dominated by Chamberlain² and has a record which is as black as possible in regard to world freedom and democracy, which it has succeeded in killing both in central Europe and Spain. The responsibility for this is fundamentally Chamberlain's.

It is quite clear that Chamberlain has been pursuing a policy, for some time past, of bringing about economic and political arrangements with Nazi Germany. He has failed in that because of various forces, but he has gone a long way in removing obstructions from Germany's path and adding to the strength of the Nazis. I do not think he has fundamentally changed his policy even now, despite his brave speeches. A brave speech is delivered when there is popular pressure, but the general policy remains the same. It may be that owing to the rapid development in the situation he might drive himself into a war against Germany, but at no time can one trust Mr Chamberlain to fight for democracy. And it is inconceivable for us to march under his banner. Even a free India, though it would gladly throw in its resources on the side of democracy and freedom in a world struggle, would not, I think, ally itself with Chamberlain's policy or submit to his leadership. For a subject India dominated by British imperialism to do so is unthinkable.

To the question whether India would not stand to lose heavily in the event of Britain involving herself in a life and death struggle with totalitarianism, unaided by friends of democracy, I would say that India as well as the rest of the world certainly stand to suffer greatly if fascism dominates the world. But India will not suffer greatly if British imperialism fades away. The suggestion that England would prefer defeat rather than a fair deal to the empire and liquidation of her imperialism is itself significant. All major questions in the world today, whether those in Europe or in the Far East, political or economic, fascist or imperialist, are tied up together, and it is difficult to consider one without the other. The question of Indian freedom is not only intimately related to these and other questions, but in a sense it is a crucial one, having a tremendous bearing on the solution of the questions.

The establishment of Indian independence would lead inevitably to the termination of British imperialism, and England will then become a really democratic country. The end of British imperialism will lead to the ending of every imperialism and the establishment of a united democratic front against fascism. That is the real answer to Herr Hitler's demand for colonies. The struggle with fascism then become a straight one. Therefore, for British statesmen, to try to keep the question of Indian independence apart from other issues, is to seek to evade the real crux of the question, and by seeking a temporary advantage, they are injuring the cause of democracy and of England itself.

Today, even a real democrat in England hesitates to fight under Mr Chamberlain's leadership because of the repeated betrayals in the past, which he has seen. For an Indian to think in terms of

helping British imperialism in war is an even more absurd proposition, if the people in England are so keen to preserve their own empire at any cost.

³ In an editorial published in the *National Herald* of 28 April 1939, Jawaharlal Nehru observed that 'as a nation, interested in world freedom, India sees with horror the growth of the Nazi and fascist powers which embody the latest and most brutal phases of imperialism,' and 'realises that a world triumph of fascism will mean the suppression of freedom every where and the throttling of her own struggle for freedom...' 'But, and there are many buts, she is not a free nation, and as a subject country she can only be exploited to others' advantage and for the further strengthening of the imperialism that holds her. She cannot submit to that.'

⁴ Neville (Arthur) Chamberlain (1869–1940); British Prime Minister from 28 May 1937 to 10 May 1940, whose name is identified with the policy of 'appeasement' towards Adolph Hitler's Germany in the period immediately preceding World War II. By the Munich agreement of 30 September, he had Eduard Daladier of France granted almost all of Hitler's demands and left Czechoslovakia defenceless. When Hitler seized the rest of Czechoslovakia (10–16 March 1939), Chamberlain announced an Anglo-France guarantee of armed support for Poland, Romania and Greece. When the Germans attacked Poland (1 September 1939), Chamberlain countered with a British declaration of war the next day.

9. Muslims and the War

Bombay Ahrar Conference Decision, *Hindustan Times*, 22 May 1939

22 May 1939

That the Muslims of India would not repeat their blunder of 1914 and would not give any help in the shape of men or money to defend British imperialism was the text of a resolution adopted by the Bombay Provincial Ahrar Conference and Jamiyat al-Ulama at its open session tonight.¹

The resolution recalled the unprecedented sacrifice made by the Muslim community during the Great War and how the British Government had failed to keep its promises about India, Palestine and the Holy Lands of Arabia. In the event of a future war, the conference declared, such steps would be taken as might be necessary to achieve their goal of liberating India and the Muslim countries. The resolution disapproved the Muslim League policy in having supported the Army Bill². Besides, the conference declared that any agreement arrived at by the Congress and Mahatma Gandhi would not be acceptable to Muslims of India until the demands for the independence of India and the other Muslim countries were satisfied.

¹ Later, the Majlis-i-Ahrar of the North-West Frontier Province formed a 'war council' with Maulana Abdul Qayyum Papalzai, President of the Peshawar Majlis-i-Ahrar, as the first dictator to launch an anti-war propaganda in the Frontier and Punjab. The war council decided to send *jathas* of Ahrar volunteers to Punjab to defy the provisions of the Defence of India Ordinance and to court arrest. The first *jatha* of five Ahrar volunteers took out a procession which passed through the main streets of Peshawar shouting anti-war slogans. *Leader*, 17 October 1939.

² This Bill, passed on 8 September 1939, proposed penalties for those conducting a campaign against recruitment to the defence services.

10. Kitchlew on Congress and War

'Kitchlew's Appeal to Muslims to join Congress', *Hindustan Times*, 22 May 1939

22 May 1939

More than 15,000 villagers, mostly Jats, flocked to hear the Congress message at the Hissar Political Conference which was held here under the Presidentship of Saifuddin Kitchlew, President, Punjab Provincial Congress Committee. Villagers in batches carrying national flags came from almost every village of the district, and scenes of unprecedented enthusiasm were witnessed throughout the proceedings. Kitchlew who came here in company with Sardar Sohan Singh Josh¹ and others,

was given a right royal reception by Pandit Neki Ram Sharma, chairman, reception committee, Pandit Thakur Dass Bhargava,² Advocate, Lala Hardev Sahi and others.

Kitchlew was given a tremendous ovation when he rose to speak. He made a stirring appeal to his countrymen to rally round the Congress which represented the country's urge for freedom. He envisaged the downfall of the Unionist Ministry within six months, if they all joined their hands and made a determined and united onslaught on the reactionaries and sycophants masquerading under the name of Unionists.

Proceeding Kitchlew strongly denounced the policy of Muslim League in preaching hatred which, according to him, was emasculating their manhood. He invited his co-religionists to join the Congress which was the only national organization in the country fighting for freedom and turn a deaf ear to the counsels of the league.

Clarifying the Congress position in regard to India's participation in War, Kitchlew condemned the attitude of Sikandar Hyat Khan in giving assurances of unconditional support to the British people in the event of the outbreak of war.³ The propagation of his views on War from the platform of the Muslim League at Sholapur and the presence of his leader, Jinnah, had exposed the League as an out and out pro-British organisation which was living on an appeal to fanaticism. Kitchlew declared that they who belonged to the Congress would stoutly resist the dragging of India into any imperialist war in which Great Britain was involved....

Referring to the present Congress politics, Kitchlew reiterated his faith in the leadership of Gandhi and the old guards who had proved their mettle. He was sure that Gandhi who was feeling the pulse of the nation would throw a challenge to British imperialism the moment he felt the country was ready for a fight. He expressed his determination to free the Congress organisation in the Punjab from undesirable elements....

¹ Sohan Singh Josh (b. 1898); educated at Khalsa College Amritsar; joined freedom struggle close contact with Ghadar Party; participated in Akali movement of 1921; member of SGPC; editor of *Kisan* and *Naya Zamana*; joined the Indian National Congress in 1927 and was general secretary of the Punjab Provincial Congress Committee.

² Pandit Thakur Das Bhargava (1886-1962); educated at Christian College, Lahore; secured Law degree from the University Law College, Lahore; elected to Legislative Assembly in 1926 as a Nationalist Party candidate; advocated the cause of the upliftment of the Harijans and associated with various educational projects.

³ The Bombay Muslim League Conference at Sholapur on 6 May was inaugurated by Jinnah. In his presidential speech Sikander Hyat Khan assured Muslim support to the British in the event of war. Sikander's position was summed up in his following statement:

'So far as the Punjab is concerned, I need do no more than repeat the assurance which I gave on behalf of the province, in September last, when I guaranteed that the manpower and resources of the Punjab will be unhesitatingly and ungrudgingly placed at the disposal of Great Britain and her allies, in the service of our Motherland and for the sacred cause of justice, righteousness and freedom. I repeat this offer is made with no sinister bargaining intent, but on behalf of a self-respecting and brave people who prefer their hand of friendship and co-operation in a spirit of mutual confidence and trust. If unfortunately a war cannot be avoided, then the Punjab will rise as one man to fight the enemies of peace and freedom—their motto —"For my God, my country and my home".' *Tribune*, 26 August 1939

11. India and the War

Zetland to Linlithgow, 20 June 1939, Zetland Papers, Acc. No. 1969, NAI

To return for a moment to the political situation in India, I have been a good deal impressed with the apparent moderation of Rajendra Prasad, now clothed with the authority conferred upon him by his Presidentship of the Congress; and my early impression has been greatly confirmed by the account of his discussions with Bardoloi about the Digboi Strike¹ which is contained in Twynam's

letter of the 5th addressed to you. He is evidently a person to be encouraged. I do not think I have ever met him personally and I should be interested to know whether you are personally acquainted with him. It is quite possible that the action of the Japanese at Tientsin¹ may bring home to thoughtful India Nationalists the dangers to which they might be exposed in the event of Great Britain being exposed to any serious risk as the result of an outbreak of war and it may well be that men of the way of thinking of Rajendra Prasad might well decide in the event of serious emergency to come down on our side rather than to maintain the attitude of neutrality. In this event, things in the provinces would of course be made much easier for us....

¹ The reference is to the labour strike at the Digboi oil fields which started on 2 April the war broke out. Digboi was declared a 'protected area' even before the recommendations of the conciliation board were implemented and the retrenched labourers reinstated. The aggrieved labourers secured no redressal of their grievances and their appeals to the Governor of Assam and the Viceroy were ignored. The Assam oil company evicted 3,000 labourers involved in the strike.

² After the Manchurian crisis, Japan continued to follow an aggressive policy in China in 1933, the Tientsin Railway was created so that Japan could control the access to China from the North. In 1935, when two pro-Japanese Chinese reporters were killed, Japan obtained further concession in Tientsin by which China had to remove her troops and officials from the territory. In 1937 Japan occupied Hopei, Chahar, followed by the occupation of Shanghai in 1939.

12. Left Consolidation to Achieve National Unity

Bombay Chronicle, 23 June 1939

The Objects, Programme and Problems connected with the organisation of the 'Forward Bloc' were expounded by Babu Subhas Chandra Bose, in the course of his Presidential Address to the All India Forward Bloc Conference, which met at the Sir Cowasji, Jehangir Hall, on Thursday evening.

The hall was packed to capacity with overflowing audience crowding the doorways. Rallying all the leftist elements in the Congress the achievement of complete unity in the Congress on the basis of an honourable understanding and the resumption of the struggle for independence were the objects of the Forward Bloc said Subhas Babu....

Prominent among those who attended the Conference were Sardar Sardul Singh Caveeshar, Prof. N.G. Ranga, Dr Z.A. Ahmed, Mohanlal Gautam, R.S. Rulkar, Satyaranjan Bakshi, Editor *Advance*. Kali Pada Mukherjee, Ashraf-ud-Din Chowdhury, Secretary, Bengal Provincial Congress Committee; Mubarak Sagar, Jai Prakash Narain, Swami Govindanand, Swami Shahajanand Saraswati, Mr and Mrs M.N. Roy and most of the local Socialist and Communist leaders....

Mr K.F. Nariman said: It is admitted on all sides, that the most urgent need to-day is to bring all the left forces together, on one common platform, with a common immediate objective. Whatever differences there may be in the detailed programme and policies of various groups and parties in the Congress, still there are enough points of common agreement, common aims and objective, to bring them together at least on such agreed and accepted issues. I will refer to only one and the most important one on which all radicals and left-wingers are agreed.

In a joint statement recently issued by the leaders of two such important groups, Messrs P.C. Joshi and Jayaprakash Narain, it is stated: 'Finally the programme must include as one of its most important items, "the democratisation of the Congress, elimination of corruption and opportunism from it and the counteracting of the tendency in certain quarters to disrupt it by driving out the Socialists"; in other words, to put an end to the existing "Authoritarian" tendencies in the existing High Command in the Congress. I am sure there is none amongst us here who sympathises with our cause, to whatever party or group he may belong, who could quarrel with or dissent, from that

statement or would not agree that restoration of Democracy in the Congress should be the most important item of the new Leftist move; there are individuals and groups, who certainly desire much more and many other items. They are at liberty to pursue their programme or policy, howsoever different one from the other, but can they not be all brought together on the common platform atleast on this one issue, rightly described by the above leaders as the most important item of our programme, the restoration of Democracy in the Congress? There are so many other issues on which there is similar agreement.

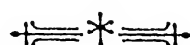
It is not enough that they should merely appeal to the followers to support and co-operate with the Forward Bloc, sympathise with the move and even wish it success; there must be a formal co-ordination and federation of all on a common platform. They rightly complain of tendencies in certain quarters to drive out Socialists and the radicals.

This Authoritarian tendency and Group Politics has also been the root of every evil in the present day Congress and one of the main causes of organisational corruption. The whole effort, energy, and labour is devoted first to capture power and then to retain it. All means, fair and foul, are resorted to gain this object. No less an authority than Pandit Jawaharlal has very aptly described this in his recent remarkable article "Where are we?" "I think there are enough men of goodwill in the Congress to cope up with the situation, if they set about it, in the right way. But their minds are full of party conflicts and they desire to crush this individual or that group. Obviously bad men are preferred to good men because the former promise to toe the party line. When this happens, there is bound to be deterioration." There could not be a better analysis of the present situation than this. Thus being convinced of the downward drift and deterioration in the Congress, it is really deplorable that Pandit Jawaharlal should still refuse to take a definite and resolute move in the matter and end this deplorable state. Instead of putting a blunt query "where are we?" he should lead to where he wants us to be. Far from weakening the Congress as he apprehends, this is the only way to prevent further demoralisation and disruption, to increase its strength, power and vitality and also to improve its status and position and prestige.

United we survive and restore Democracy, divided we may be wiped out and leave the path clear for the daily growing and strengthening authoritarian tendency. Once Democracy is restored the way is made clear for all the radical programme, anti-federation, anti-war, united front against Imperialism and militant struggle in Indian States. It will give a new technique, not of surrender but of fight....

Mr Subhas Chandra Bose in a speech lasting over 85 minutes, explained the origin, justification, objects and programme of the Forward Bloc.

It was necessary to have a Left Wing, in the Congress to prevent stagnation as well as to force the pace of the march. The Forward Bloc had arisen to fulfill a deeply felt national and social requirement. There was also a philosophic justification for the Forward Bloc. The progress of humanity was impossible without conflict. The Hegelian dialectic was perhaps nearest the truth and it was only through a conflict between thesis and anti-thesis that a synthesis could be evolved.



13. Extracts from *National Front*

These extracts from volume 2, no. 25 of the *National Front* (6 August 1924), edited by P.C. Joshi, were forfeited by the Bengal Government on 10 August 1939. The notification was issued by E.N. Blandy under section 19 of the Indian Press (Emergency Powers) Act of 1931. Home (Political), F.No. 37/29, 1939, NAI

6 August 1939

No amount of repression could kill our movement. Jails for our youth became their study circles. Police lathis on our women only strengthen our determination to overthrow the British Raj so that we may live with honour and self-respect. Gallows for our heroes gave us martyrs whose memory inspired us never to lay down our arms.

Imperialism decided upon a new strategy to break our unity and smash our strength.

Imperialism stands terrorized by the stupendous upsurge of the workers' and peasants' movements.

What Imperialist repression could not achieve Gandhiji's line would produce—destroy the unity of Congress and keep Congressmen off the track of struggle.

It (revival of the tenancy law in CP) is an alien system and has been imposed on this province by the British Government 80 years back.

No solution of the peasant problem is worth the name which does not deliver the peasantry from this bondage, a bondage which has not only exploited the peasantry economically but has made it meek, subservient and fear-stricken before the landed aristocracy and the bureaucracy—the imperialist State machine.

These days, when the tenants are finding it impossible to pay even the current rent, when they have already been squeezed to the last drop by the imperialist, *malguzari* and capitalist systems, how many tenants will be able to pay 12.5 and 10 times the rent outright?

The Government is not benevolent either, its short-sighted policy is guided by little consideration of the deplorable conditions of the peasantry.

I wonder if this is the beginning of a wider campaign of repression. The policy of repression has been pursued by the Government wherever an agitation—not necessarily directed against the Government—reached an embarrassing stage.

While the ultimate effect has often been only to deepen the hostility of the people towards an administration which takes recourse to measures of repression rather than relief.

In spite of all the propaganda that is being carried on in the province against the *Kisan* movement by forces of reaction which support Government and find favour with it the discontent among the peasantry, both Muslim and Hindu, is visibly increasing.

14. Congress and War

Editorial, *Bombay Chronicle*, 15 August 1939

15 August 1939

One is not surprised at the way the Congress Working Committee's resolution on war is misinterpreted by certain Liberal leaders and other critics of the Congress.¹ Probably it is not clearly understood by them. It may be better understood if considered along with the resolution of the Haripura Congress explaining the general policy of the Congress towards war.² That resolution states that India stands for international peace and co-operation that she can effectively co-operate only when she is free and that 'world co-operation is impossible of achievement so long as the

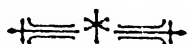
roots of international conflict remain and one nation dominates over another and imperialism holds [s]away'. The resolution then reviews the then European situation and points out how British foreign policy has consistently supported the fascist powers in Germany, Spain and the Far East and must, therefore, largely shoulder the responsibility for the progressive deterioration of the world situation and how that policy 'is helping in the drift to imperialist world war'. The resolution finally specifies the Congress policy in the following words:

'India can be no party to such an imperialist war and will not permit her man-power and resources to be exploited in the interest of British imperialism. Nor can, India join any war without the consent of her people. The Congress, therefore, entirely disapproves of war preparations being made in India and large-scale manoeuvres and air raid precautions by which it has been sought to spread an atmosphere of approaching war in India. In the event of an attempt being made to involve India in a war, this will be resisted.'

The policy enunciated in the above resolution makes a necessary difference between imperialist and other wars. With the former India will have nothing to do as her support to them will mean supporting foreign domination over herself or some other country. In the case of other wars India may or may not support them. She must be free to make her own choice, whatever it be. If an attempt is made to impose a war upon her against her will, 'this will be resisted.' In the light of the Congress policy as elucidated above, the Working Committee's resolution on war should be clear enough to those who understand the distinction between imperialist and other wars or a similar distinction between a war to safeguard democracy and one to betray it in support of fascism. Britain's part in the European developments has been notorious and the Working Committee only reflects world opinion in describing it as 'a betrayal of democracy'. The Committee, accordingly, declares; 'The past policy of the British Government as well as recent developments demonstrates abundantly that this Government does not stand for freedom and democracy and may, at any time, betray these ideals, India cannot associate herself with a movement for democratic freedom which is denied to her and which is likely to be betrayed.'

In as much as this part of the resolution follows a statement that 'the sympathies of the Working Committee are entirely with the peoples who stand for democracy and freedom', certain critics of the Congress describe the resolution as inconsistent and illogical. The critics argue that, if Britain joins a war now, it can only be to safeguard democracy and freedom against fascism and imperialism and that for Congress not to support Britain would be inconsistent with its sympathy for democracy and condemnation of fascism. There would, indeed, be inconsistency if Congress were convinced that Britain would really fight for democracy and not for safeguarding her imperialist interests. But Congress is not, and has no reason to be, so convinced. The last war, Britain's present policy and, in particular, her persistence in exploiting India and holding her in subjection forbid such conviction. The Congress will be convinced of Britain's 'bona fides' and concern for democracy and freedom if she grants both these to India fully and leaves her as free to define her war policy as are the dominions.

¹ The Congress decision to boycott the Central Legislative Assembly as protest against the dispatch of Indian troops abroad and the extension of the life of the assembly, taken at Wardha session (9-12 August) was criticised. Chimanlal Setalvad said that the reasons given for the decision were neither convincing nor sound. H.P. Mody, a member of the Central Legislative Assembly, also deplored the Congress decision.



15. Congress and War

Editorial, *Tribune*, 16 August 1939

16 August 1939

The comprehensive resolution recorded by the Congress Working Committee on the international situation, the question of India's participation in any war on which Britain may embark in the immediate or near future and the actual preparations for war that are being made in India is perhaps the most important and sensational decision which any Congress authority has taken so far on this vitally important subject.

On the two vital questions of principle involved in the resolution we can imagine no difference of opinion among patriotic and self-respecting Indians. One is that India should not participate in any imperialistic war, any war on which Britain may embark for the furtherance of her imperialistic ends or for which the furtherance of such ends is likely to be the direct or indirect effect. The other is that with whatever and in view a war may be fought by Britain and however justifiable it may be itself, India's actual participation in it must be free and voluntary and must depend on the choice of her accredited leaders and spokesmen. Both propositions, viewed as general statements, are more or less self-evident. Theoretically as well as in actual practice British imperialism is fundamentally incompatible with India's freedom, and the freedom of all those countries that are held in a state of political subjection by Britain; and any attempt to further Britain's imperialistic ends must necessarily affect injuriously the cause of freedom in India and in those countries. Further, India today definitely and irrevocably stands for bureaucracy, and democracy and imperialism are mutually exclusive terms. This may sound strange to those who are accustomed to look upon Britain herself as a great democratic power. That Britain is a great democratic power, in fact, one of the most democratic of all countries in the world in her internal affairs, is not likely to be denied even by her worst critics and detractors. But democratic at home, Britain's sympathy for other democratic countries and for countries struggling for independence and democratic freedom, whether within what has hitherto been known as the British Empire or in the world generally, has always been severely limited by her self-interests. The betrayal of Ethiopia, of Spain and of Czechoslovakia are among the latest and most glaring illustrations of the unreality of Britain's democratic professions in international affairs, when those professions are not backed by or are in conflict with her immediate self-interest.

But while the general position of the Congress is undoubtedly sound in this case, it does not follow that England can never participate in a war in the interests of democracy or that when she does so it is still the duty of India or the Congress to distrust her and not to participate in the war either because Britain has in the past not fought for democracy abroad, or because India herself is not yet a democratically governed country. It is open to a nation, as to an individual, whether under the stress of circumstances or otherwise, to turn over a new leaf, and when it does so, its action must be judged on its own merits and not merely in the light of its antecedents. In the present case no man who has given the least thought to the subject can deny that any war on which Britain may embark in the immediate or near future, whether against Germany and Italy in Europe or against Japan in Asia, will be a war against Fascism and in the interests of democracy, and that in no conceivable sense of the term could such a war be described as a war for the furtherance of British Imperialism. We repeat that it is impossible for India not to be in sympathy with such a war, especially as she has strongly and repeatedly condemned Britain's failure to fight the menace of Fascism and to make the world safe for democracy. Nor is there any point in saying that India cannot support Britain in any war even though it be just and fought in the interests of democracy unless and until she is herself a free country. If the fact of India's being a subject

country does not prevent her condemning Britain's betrayal of democracy, surely it does not and cannot prevent her supporting Britain when she does fight for democracy instead of betraying it. The fact that she is not a self-governing country may and will no doubt stand in the way of her doing all that she could have done if she had been a free and self-governing country. It does not and cannot prevent her doing all that she can in her actual position....

The second proposition is equally incontestable in theory and practice, and is yet equally subject to necessary limitations. There is not the smallest doubt that the British Government has flouted the declarations of the Congress and the Assembly by sending or deciding to send Indian troops to Egypt and Singapore without the prior consent of India's chosen representatives; and the Congress is, in our opinion, fully justified in entering its strongest protest against this action. Whether the protest should take the form of a direction to all Congress members of the Central Assembly to refrain from attending the next session of the Assembly, a direction which the leader of the Congress Party in the Assembly has lost no time in implementing by issuing necessary instructions to the members of party, is a matter in respect of which two opinions may and do exist. There is a considerable body of opinion both within and outside the Congress which inclines to the view that this form of protest, while it has its undoubted moral value, is calculated to do more harm than good to concrete Indian interests. But the validity of the protest itself can admit of no question. Of far greater importance was the decision of the Committee that the provincial Governments should not in any way assist the war preparations of the British Government and bear in mind the policy laid down by the Congress to which they must adhere. If and in so far as this means that the Congress governments should not assist preparations made without reference to them and to the elected representatives of the people in the Legislature and without their expressed consent we are ourselves in full sympathy with the general direction. But the Committee should, in our opinion, have definitely stated the ground of its view. It should have made it perfectly clear that its opposition is based primarily on the ground of principle, that India should not participate in any war undertaken without her specific consent. Such consent can, in our opinion, be obtained if the Government will go about the business in the right way. They should forthwith establish a committee at Delhi consisting of the nominees of the autonomous provincial Governments and the chosen representatives of the Central Legislature and should make India's participation in any war dependent on the free consent of this committee.

But here again the general proposition is subject to an obvious and all-important reservation. If India is actually invaded or is in danger of being invaded on land, by sea or by air, then the people should, in our opinion, forget their differences with the Government for the time being and should cooperate with the latter in resisting the invader....

16. Congress and the Next War

Editorial, *Leader*, 17 August 1939

17 August 1939

It appears to us that the resolution passed by the Working Committee of the Congress defining the policy of the organisation in the event of a war suffers from much confusion of thought. The broad fact of the international situation is that there are two groups of powers, one of which has made force the instrument of national policy and the other has been striving for the settlement of international disputes by peaceful discussions at the conference table. Germany, Italy and Japan are the aggressor states. Mr Chamberlain followed the policy of appeasement but he has dismally failed. It has been interpreted as a sign of weakness and whetted the appetite of aggressors. This

policy of weak-kneed surrender to totalitarian states has been condemned by no one more strongly than by leading Congressmen themselves. To all intents and purposes this policy has been abandoned, and the spokesmen of Britain and France have openly and emphatically declared that they would oppose any further aggression with all their resources. They have at the same time declared that the door of discussion is open. These countries stand for democracy and freedom. It is true that Mr Chamberlain's record does not inspire the confidence among his own people that he really means what he says, but at the same time there is no gain saying the fact that many prominent Conservatives, including Mr Churchill¹ and Mr Eden,² the Liberal and the Labour parties are enthusiastic supporters of the new policy, and that Lord Halifax³ is opposed to any further trucking to the dictators.

The Working Committee in its resolution says that its sympathies are 'entirely with the peoples who stand for democracy and freedom'. The overwhelming majority of people in Britain and France do stand for freedom and democracy. This is apparent from the support which is being accorded to the new policy. If Britain is involved in a war, this war will be forced upon it. Even the worst critics of Mr Chamberlain will admit that he is a man of peace and that he has brought discredit upon himself and his country in his great anxiety to avoid a conflict. If war comes it will not be of Britain's seeking.

What should be the attitude of the Congress in the case of such a war? Will the Congress be showing its sympathy for peoples who stand for democracy and freedom if it adopts an obstructive attitude, or will it be helping the aggressors by doing so? It is all very well for the committee to recall that the Congress has 'clearly enunciated its policy in the event of a war, and declared its determination to oppose all attempts to impose a war on India'. But the declaration regarding the imposition of war on India does not apply to the situation as it exists. The war will be imposed on India not by Britain but by the action of Germany and Italy. It has been asserted that the past policy of the British Government as well as the recent developments demonstrate abundantly that this Government does not stand for freedom and democracy and may at any time betray these ideals. What are the recent developments? They are that the British Government has been trying to organise an anti-aggression front and to enter into a comprehensive agreement with Russia to meet the challenge of the totalitarian states.⁴ Certainly Britain stands far more for freedom and democracy than do Germany and Italy whose rulers scoff at them and have destroyed them in their own country. And does the Congress itself worship in the shrine of Democracy and Freedom? Ask Messrs. Nariman, Khare and Bose.⁵ Has not the Working Committee itself been charged with fascist tendencies? The committee has told the provincial governments not to assist in any way the war preparations of the British Government and to keep in mind the policy laid down by the Congress to which they must adhere. This injunction would have been all right if the British Government intended to embark upon a policy of aggression with a view to rob other people of their liberties. But this is not its policy. Where would the Congress be if Britain is vanquished and Germany or Italy rule India? There is hope of India attaining freedom under the aegis of British rule. The British people believe in freedom and democracy and they sympathize with nationalist and democratic movements in other countries. Their heart is sound. But the dictators have no faith in freedom and democracy, and as they have enslaved their own people and maintain their power by ruthless methods, they will treat India similarly and much worse if in an armed conflict they come out successful. Let not our dissatisfaction with British policy in relation to India blind us

to the vital issues involved in a life and death struggle it is the duty of India to stand by its side in its own interests....

¹ Winston Churchill (1874–1965); educated at Harrow and Sandhurst; served with Spanish forces in Cuba; under-secretary of state for colonies, 1905–8; home secretary 1910–11; first Lord of Admiralty 1911–15; secretary of state for war and for air, 1919–21; Chancellor of Exchequer, 1924–29; member, war cabinet, 1939; Prime Minister, 1940–45.

² Robert Anthony Eden (1897–1977); served in World War I; under-secretary, foreign office, 1931–33; Lord Privy Seal, 1934–35; secretary of state, foreign affairs, 1935–38; resigned in disagreement with policy of Chamberlain government after the Munich Conference; War Secretary, 1940

³ Edward Wood Halifax (1881–1959); represented Ripon as conservative MP from 1910–1925; Viceroy of India, 1926–31; returned to cabinet as President of Board of Education, 1932; Lord Privy Seal, 1935, foreign secretary, 1938.

⁴ Ostensibly, Britain was trying to reach an agreement with Russia to meet the challenge of totalitarian states. The British Mission reached Moscow on 11 August. But the Mission met with no success. Eventually, the Russo-German pact was concluded on 24 August 1939.

⁵ The reference is to the Nariman episode in 1937, when K.F. Nariman came into conflict with Patel. Although a popular leader of Bombay, President of the Bombay Congress Committee and a member of the AICC and the CWC. Nariman could not become Bombay's chief minister. N.B. Khare was the first chief minister of the Central provinces and Berar, but had to resign due to factionalism in the Congress. Bose was the central figure in the controversy centering around the Congress President in 1939. On 11 August the AICC disqualified him from the Presidentship of the Bengal PCC and debarred him from any elective Congress Committee for three years.

17. India and the Next War

Article by S. Satyamurti, *Hindustan Times*, 20 August 1939

20 August 1939

There is a great deal of loose thinking, loose speaking and loose writing on this matter. Of course, in this article I do not intend to prophesy what that portion of India, if it exists, which is not represented by the Indian National Congress may or may not do in the next war. Confining myself to the attitude of the Indian National Congress, I want to make it perfectly clear that the Congress is logically consistent and patriotic in its clear enunciation of the policy towards any war to which Britain may find herself a party. First and foremost, India claims the right, which has been conceded for many years now to all the self-governing Dominions, that she has the sole right to decide if and when war breaks out whether she shall be a party to the war and, if so on which side, or whether she may remain absolutely neutral. The theory that because England is at war with any foreign country, the self governing Dominions must be presumed to be at war with those countries has been exploded. England has actively acquiesced in that position. That is why the British Foreign Office keeps itself in active touch with the Cabinets of all the self-governing Dominions and no major decision on questions of foreign policy is taken by the British Government without the consent of the self-governing Dominions. Questions are often asked in the House of Commons on this matter and are always answered by His Majesty's Government to the effect that the Dominions are being kept in active consultation and that their consent is taken on all these major decisions.

So far, however, as India is concerned the matter has been made perfectly clear on the floor of the Indian Legislative Assembly by Aubrey Metcalfe¹ answering questions by me on this matter to the effect that India, not being a self-governing Dominion, is not entitled to be consulted on the question of foreign policy of Great Britain. Therefore, India, *a fortiori* has the right to say that she cannot commit herself to any war by Great Britain to the effect that she will necessarily support England because she is no party to this declaration of war. But the Congress has a definite foreign policy of its own....

Now it is constantly claimed by the apologists of Great Britain in this matter that after all Great Britain is fighting or will fight for democracies as against fascism and, therefore, India must support England, if she is consistent in her opinion that the people of India stand with peoples who stand for democracy and freedom. But is it perfectly clear that Britain is on the side of democracies and is against fascism or Nazi aggression? Let Abyssinia² answer, let Spain answer,³ and let Czechoslovakia answer⁴ and, last but not least, let China answer!⁵ After all, if England is so much on the side of democracies why is she fighting shy of an alliance with Russia? Why does she constantly surrender as at Munich⁶ and why is Poland⁷ likely to be betrayed again by the democratic powers? India is convinced not by words but by deeds. Taking the deeds of England and of democracies like France, it looks as if these countries pay lip homage to democracies, but they are ever on the side of fascist powers. At any rate, big finance has much more in common with Hitler and Mussolini than with Russia or with China. That is the inevitable result of our study of contemporary history and contemporary international negotiations and politics. That being so, India has got to be convinced the Congress will certainly fight for democracy against fascism, provided she is given the right and the privilege of deciding for herself.

From this point of view, the Working Committee is right when it stated recently that the Congress has further clearly enunciated its policy in the event of war and declared its determination to oppose all attempts to impose a war on India. The Committee is bound by this policy of the Congress and will give effect to it so as to prevent the exploitation of Indian resources for imperialistic ends. Now emphasis is to be laid on the words 'to impose a war on India', and 'to prevent the exploitation of Indian resources for imperialistic ends'. If Great Britain does not want to impose a war on India, Britain must take the leaders of India into a fullest confidence and satisfy them that any war in which she may be a party is a war which must appeal to the enlightened self-interest of India as a whole. If they do not do that, it will be a war imposed on India and India will decide not to support any such war which is imposed against her will. Again, India cannot allow her resources to be exploited for imperialist ends. Let there be no mistake about it. Imperialism is the most potent cause of modern warfare. If all empires be liquidated, including the British Empire in *esse* and the Japanese Empire in *posse*, I have no doubt that there will be very few wars.

It is asked, however, by friendly critics even--is it certain that any war on which Britain may embark in the immediate or near future would be a war for the furtherance of imperialistic ends? That is a matter to be decided. If England had gone to war, for example, for defending Czechoslovakia, India may have had no difficulty in supporting her, but if England betrays Czechoslovakia, Poland and China in succession, and yet goes to war to keep her Empire somehow or other, it will be a war for imperialist purpose. This only the future can decide.

And after all, it is not difficult for England to get the co-operation of India, if really she is disinterested as she claims to be. If England wants to cling to her Empire as long as she can, whatever may happen to democracies elsewhere and whatever may happen to humanity as a whole, India cannot and will not help England. If England, however, feels that the time has come for democracies to assert themselves and put down fascist and imperialist or Nazi aggression, she has to take a few steps. She must liquidate her Empire and recognize India as an equal partner, entitled to the fullest right of decision in all her matters, internal and external. That way lies the future of democracy not this way, of blind imperialism which wants to keep all that it has and does not care in the least what happens to the rest of humanity. That is India's attitude to the war and in hope there will be no misunderstanding about it.

¹ Aubrey Metcalfe was a nominated official member of Indian Legislative Assembly.

² Abyssinia was invaded by Italy in 1935 and annexed in 1936. The Anglo-Italian agreement of 16 April 1938 led to the British recognition of the Italian conquest of Ethiopia.

³ The reference is to the civil war in Spain with the rebel troops under general Franco. The British recognised Rebel Spain.

⁴ Czechoslovakia was virtually dismembered by Germany. The Munich conference of 1938 accepted German claims.

⁵ China was a victim of continued Japanese aggression after the Manchurian crisis

⁶ The Munich conference was convened by Hitler on 29 September 1938. This resulted in an agreement between Germany, Britain, France and Italy. The conference accepted German claims to Czechoslovakia territory. A commission of four powers dominated by German and Italian representatives was appointed to settle points of dispute.

⁷ After the Munich conference, Germany demanded that Poland should cede Danzig.

18. Gandhi's Statement to the Press

Harijan, 26 August 1939, *CWMG*, Vol. 69, pp. 112-14

Segaon

23 August 1939

I continue to receive letters, mostly abusive, about what may be called the Subhas Babu resolution of the Working Committee. I also saw a letter addressed to Rajendra Babu, which can hardly be surpassed in the use of filthy language. I have seen some criticisms about the war resolution.

I owe it to the public to make my position clear about both these resolutions. I must confess that the Subhas Babu resolution was drafted by me. I can say that the members of the Working Committee would have shirked the duty of taking action if they could have. They knew that there would be a storm of opposition against their action. It was easier for them to have a colourless resolution than to have one which was no respecter of persons. Not to take some action would have amounted to abdication of their primary function of preserving discipline among Congressmen. Subhas Babu had invited action. He had gallantly suggested that if any action was to be taken it should be taken against him as the prime mover. In my opinion the action taken by the Working Committee was the mildest possible. There was no desire to be vindictive. Surely the word vindictiveness loses all force and meaning when the position of Subhas Babu is considered. He knew that he could not be hurt by the Working Committee. His popularity had put him above being affected by any action that the Working Committee might take. He had pitted himself against the Working Committee, if not the Congress organisation. The members of the Working Committee, therefore, had to perform their duty and leave the Congressmen and the public to judge between themselves and Subhas Babu. It has been suggested that Subhas Babu has done what I would have done under similar circumstances. I cannot recall a single instance in my life of having done what Subhas Babu has done, i.e., defied an organisation to which I owed allegiance, I could understand rebellion after secession from such an organisation. That was the meaning and secret of the non-violent non-co-operation of 1920.

But I am not penning these lines so much to justify the action of the Working Committee as to appeal to Subhas Babu and his supporters to take the decision of the Working Committee in the right spirit and submit to it while it lasts. He has every right to appeal to the AICC against the decision. If he fails there, he can take the matter before the annual session of the Congress. All this can be done without bitterness and without imputing motives of the worst type to the members of the Working Committee. Why not be satisfied with the belief that the members have committed an error of judgment? I fancy that if a majority of the AICC members signify in writing their disapproval of the action of the Working Committee, the latter will gladly resign. By imputing motives whenever there are differences of opinion, Congressmen pull down the structure that has been built up by the patient labour of half a century. Indeed, even if a bad motive is suspected, it

is better to refrain from imputing it, unless it can be proved beyond doubt. It is necessary for the sake of healthy public education that leaders of public opinion should judge events and decisions on their merits.

On the war resolution I had a conclusive defeat. I was invited to draft a resolution, and so was Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. I was proud of my draft, but my pride went before destruction. I saw that I could not carry my resolution unless I argued and pressed for it. But I had no such desire. We then listened to Jawaharlal's. And I at once admitted that it represented more truly than mine the country's opinion and even the Working Committee's as a whole. Mine was based upon out-and-out non-violence. If the Congress heartily believed in non-violence in its fullness even as a policy, this was its testing time. But Congressmen, barring individual exceptions, do not believe in such non-violence. Those who do, believe that it is the right thing only for a fight against the Government for wresting power. But the Congress has no non-violent message for the world. I would fain believe that the Congress had such a message. The conclusion to both the resolutions need not have been radically different. But the motive power being different the same conclusion would bear a different meaning in a different setting. In the face of the violence going on in India itself and in the face of the fact that Congress Governments have been obliged to fall back upon military and police assistance, a declaration to the world of non-violence would have seemed a mockery. It would have carried no weight in India or with the world. Yet, to be true to myself, I could not draft any other resolution than I did.

The fate, to which I was party, of my resolution proved the wisdom of my withdrawal of official connection with the Congress. I attend the Working Committee meetings not to identify myself with its resolutions or even its general policy. I attend in the pursuit of my mission of non-violence. So long as they want my attendance I go there to emphasize non-violence in their acts and through them in those of Congressmen. We pursue the same goal. They all of them would go the whole length with me if they could, but they want to be true to themselves and to the country which they represent for the time being, even as I want to be true to myself. I know that the progress of non-violence is seemingly a terribly slow process. But experience has taught me that it is the surest way to the common goal. There is deliverance neither for India nor for the world through clash of arms. Violence, even for vindication of justice, is almost played out. With that belief I am content to plough a lonely furrow, if it is to be my lot that I have no co-sharer in the out-and-out belief in non-violence.

19. Indian Communists Condemn British Imperialism

P.C. Joshi's statement on behalf of the Communists, *Bombay Chronicle*, 29 August 1939

29 August 1939

Mr P.C. Joshi, Editor *National Front* has issued the following statement on behalf of the Communists:

The National Congress has condemned the treacherous policy of Chamberlain which has brought this catastrophe. It has declared its sympathy and support for the popular cause in Spain, Austria, Czechoslovakia and China. It has opposed fascism and war. The Working Committee in its recent session has called upon the provincial ministers not to participate in the war preparations and resign if need arises.

Mouthpieces of imperialism like the 'Times of India', 'Statesman' are pleading that Congress should help Britain in 'saving democracy and peace'. They condemn Sjt Subhas Bose, the Socialists and Communists who stand for an effective policy of war resistance and a mass struggle against Federation now. Viceroy may issue an appeal to National leaders on these lines: 'The Premiers'

Conference is in session jointly with the parliamentary Sub-Committee. We greet their impending decision to bravely implement the decision of the National Executive.

But in the grave emergency which faces us mere resignations of the Ministries would not suffice. The declaration of war would be accompanied by a swift stroke of the imperialist executive. Under the cover of the emergency powers which the New Amendment to the Government of India Act gives the Viceroy all war measures would be put through over the heads of the Provincial Ministers. In the name of internal peace and safety all left Congress leaders, Communists, Socialist and 'Forward Bloc' leaders would be rounded up and interned. Imperialism would surely use the opportunity to disrupt our forces and defeat them singly.

Resignations accompanied by neutrality and inaction would spell disaster to our nation. The ministerial action must be the signal to mass action by the people. Our ministers must not only refuse to co-operate in the war preparations they must function as real peoples' ministers.

20. FICCI and the War

G.D. Birla to Mahadev Desai, 29 August 1939. G.D. Birla, *Bapu: A Unique Association*, Bombay, 1977, Vol. 3, pp. 329-32

Calcutta
August 29, 1939

My dear Mahadevbhai,

I am enclosing herewith a manifesto which may be issued under signature of various representative businessmen in case war breaks out. I should like to know immediately, if necessary by wire, if Bapu has got any comments to make on the same. The contents of the manifesto express our own independent views and our own feeling is that it is not incompatible with the attitude taken up by the Congress. However, we would not like to do anything in case Bapu thinks otherwise and therefore please let me have Bapu's reaction on the same as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely,
Ghanshyamdas

Shri Mahadevbhai Desai
Wardha

Draft Prepared for Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce

We are faced with an extremely critical international situation in which a great part of humanity might at any moment be involved in a gigantic war involving death and suffering to innumerable men and women of different nations. Although, we in India are not geographically or directly concerned in this European conflict, it is obvious that we cannot remain unaffected. The consequence of a war in which Britain alongwith the whole Commonwealth is involved would make a vital difference to us in more than one way. We have undoubtedly to judge this question primarily in the interests of India, but the vital and more fundamental interest of India cannot in this issue be divorced from the struggle between Britain and France on the one hand and the totalitarian states on the other. Indian public opinion has clearly perceived in recent years that the powers who are the enemies of the Britain are also enemies of those ideals of democracy and national freedom for whose realisation Indians are striving, and that these Powers are also impelled by a crude and fanatical racialism which in every way is abhorrent to the tolerant people of India. India has felt grieved and indignant at the failure of Britain and France to make a stand on behalf

of the smaller and weaker peoples of the world like those of Abyssinia, Czechoslovakia and China who lost their freedom owing to the aggressive greed of the totalitarian powers and who have been sacrificed at the altar of appeasement by those who were their friends. It is reassuring, however, that even at this late stage Britain and France have recognised that their own self-interest is intimately bound up with an international order based on law and have decided to help the weaker nations to defend themselves against force.

In this struggle, India with its national freedom still unachieved and its national aspirations unrealized, cannot remain uninterested because the consequences of a victory of the totalitarian powers must have serious repercussions on India's future. To contend that England should fight in defence of weaker nations or in the cause of democracy and to argue at the same time that India should not support England in her task is not only illogical but is also impossible. But to impose a war on India which is quite feasible under the present Constitution and to obtain Indian's willing co-operation are entirely different propositions. Unless the democratic principles for whose vindication British claims that she is to fight are effectively translated into practice in India through a satisfactory solution of the internal constitutional problem India's willing co-operation would not be possible. It is not a question of England's difficulty being regarded as India's opportunity. If this spirit of bargaining is morally wrong, equally wrong it would be on the part of Britain to appeal to India in the name of a noble cause and take advantage either of her dominant position or of the finer instincts of the India people and yet refuse to practice the democratic principles which she professes. If the freedom of Poland or Rumania or Turkey can involve England into a war, it would be reasonably expected of her to have still greater regard for the freedom of India which is within the Commonwealth. Even the Dominions are not prepared to help Britain unconditionally in the event of a war. Before they do so, they have insisted upon their being consulted regarding the foreign policy of British and the precise motives of such a war. India is also entitled to demand the rights and powers of an autonomous unit of the British Commonwealth when its burdens and responsibilities have to be undertaken by its population. As the British Prime Minister referring to the differences between Germany and Poland observed, there is nothing in these questions which 'could not and should not be solved without the use of force if only a situation of confidence could be restored'. Although there is no question of use of any force so far as the existing differences between India and England are concerned, we believe that those differences particularly after the successful function of provincial autonomy during the last two years and a half are capable of satisfactory solution and amicable settlement through friendly negotiations provided there is a sincere approach and mutual trust and goodwill. We cannot help stating that it is a feeling of distrust which has vitiated this relationship and if even now a proper atmosphere is created, it is not difficult to evolve immediately a scheme of national defence as an integral part of the defence of the British Commonwealth. Without introducing any spirit of bargaining, we therefore appeal to Britain that the policy of appeasement, which was perhaps wrongly tried with dictatorships, is far more essential in the British Commonwealth itself and should be applied to India. No one can dispute that India's march to full freedom can any longer be postponed. It is high time that the question of complete and full responsible government at the Centre, including control of foreign policy and defence, be taken up without delay. Britain should understand enough psychology to realise that when it asks for help from India, it has to offer such aid. That assistance can be extended if Britain is prepared to consider India's rights and demands. If India is to make voluntary sacrifices in this war, let her at least feel that in her home, she is enjoying the very liberty which she desires every other country should enjoy and in defence of which she is herself asked to fight.

The issues are too grave and imminent to suffer any delay. We suggest that His Excellency the Viceroy must immediately establish personal contact with the accredited leaders of India and take them into his fullest confidence in order for India to arrive at a permanent and satisfactory settlement of the outstanding Indian political question. We have no doubt that responsible Indian public opinion would respond to an appeal to sink internal differences and suspend the domestic conflict provided Britain gave proof of her earnest desire to co-operate with India as an equal partner in the British Commonwealth.

21. G.D. Birla and the Prospect of War

G.D. Birla to Mahadev Desai, 31 August 1939. G.D. Birla, *Bapu: A Unique Association*, Bombay, 1977, Vol. 3, pp. 334–35

Calcutta,
August 31, 1939.

My dear Mahadevbhai,

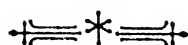
The international situation is still tense. Intuition tells me that there should be no war, but reason sees no justification for such optimism. If there is a war, I will immediately leave for Wardha or Delhi wherever I can catch Bapu. If there is no war, even then after some days I wish to meet Bapu. But we shall settle the programme in course of time.

The general desire, and this also is my own, is that England should win. It is felt that England is on the side of right. Secondly, the defeat of England may have wider consequences on India which no one desires. Has Bapu by sending his blessings to Poland made any spiritual commitment?

But if the sympathy is on the side of England, people also desire to see the political problem settled at once. Even Moore has written two very good articles and he suggests that immediately a responsible cabinet at the center should be formed with the portfolios of defence and external affairs in the hands of responsible Indian ministers. He tells me that the Viceroy's reaction has been favourable which means that if the crisis came, there should not be much difficulty about the settlement. So the position is that while we want England to win, we also want that our political differences should be settled without delay. I am not actuated by any bargaining spirit. I think our demand of settlement is not incompatible with our sympathy for Gt. Britain.

Describing my own position, while Bapu's attitude is too spiritual and noble for me to practice, I am not much enamoured of the resolution of the Working Committee. Perhaps it would have been more honest to say that our sympathies were with England but we would not fight unless there was a settlement. In any case, the Indian Mercantile community here will have to issue a manifesto immediately if war breaks out. I may be perhaps in Wardha at that time and therefore some rough guidance for the people here is necessary. I have therefore sent you a wire yesterday to send us Bapu's guidance which I would leave here behind me in case I have to go to Wardha.

Yours affectionately,
Ghanshyamdas



II SEPTEMBER 1939

22. Left Consolidation Committee's Call for a 'National Struggle Week' (31 August–6 September 1939)

National Front, 27 August 1939

At Tripuri the Indian National Congress recognised that the possibilities of provincial autonomy were being rapidly exhausted. Considering, along with this the imminence of the danger of war and the imposition of Federation, the Congress gave the call to the country to prepare for a nation-wide struggle against imperialism.

Since then there has hardly been any attempt to mobilize the people of India on the basis of this resolution. On the contrary, persistent propaganda has been carried on from responsible quarters that the country is not prepared for a struggle. This has damped the ardour of the people to a very great extent and has encouraged Imperialism to launch, on the one hand, an offensive against the people by an increasing suppression of their liberties and aspirations, and on the other, to continue unabated its preparations for imposing the monstrous scheme of Federation on the people of India.

But, in spite of this, the masses everywhere, crushed under an appalling burden of misery and oppression have been rising in revolt against Imperialism and the vested interests. Mass organisations of workers and peasants have grown rapidly and their movements have gathered strength. For the first time in our history the millions of the States' people have entered the political arena and begun to wage heroic struggles against feudal reaction for democratic rights, civil liberties and agrarian reform. In millions the masses have joined the Congress and are looking to it for a united and centralized lead.

It is evident that the people of India have the strength today to fashion the India of their boldest aspirations. It is only necessary to make the whole of the nation conscious of its strength and to prepare it for coordinating and transforming all its partial struggles into an all-embracing nation-wide struggle.

Unfortunately the reformist tendencies within our national organisation, the Congress, have precipitated an internal conflict within the organisation. In the name of discipline active disruption is sapping the very foundations of national unity.

In order to put a stop to disruption, to check the growing corruption within the Congress caused by the taste of power, to make the nation conscious of its strength and to prepare the country for a nation-wide struggle, it is imperative that the attention of the nation be focused on the central issue of struggle against imperialism, on resolutions of the Congress which call for such a struggle and on active preparation for the same.

The Left Consolidation Committee, therefore, calls upon its constituent units as well as upon the people of India to observe the National struggle week from 31st August to 6th September, 1939. In this it seeks the cooperation of all Congressmen, irrespective of parties, for the issue is one of popularising the decisions taken by the Congress of strengthening the unity of the Congress and of preparing for a nation-wide struggle. Simultaneously, the Committee reminds its supporters of the need to be restrained and dignified in their utterances, so that the real issue of struggle may be brought out in prominent relief.

The time before us is very short. The Committee requests everyone to prepare for mass demonstrations, rallies and meetings on the days of the National Struggle Week by starting immediate propaganda by means of handbills, posters, street corner meetings, house to house propaganda etc.

It also hopes that brisk enrollment of Congress members will take place during this whole period. The detailed programme for the week fixing each particular day for emphasising one particular problem before the country is given below:

August 31

Release of Political Prisoners and Civil Liberties

‘They (Congress representatives) will work for the release of political prisoners and detenus.’

‘The treatment of political prisoners has long been a scandal in India. Every effort should be made to improve this and make it humane.’

—From the Election Manifesto

‘In particular they (Congress Members in the Legislatures) should work for:

Repeal of all repressive laws.

Release of political prisoners, interneers and detenus.’

On ‘Congress Policy in Legislatures’

—From the Resolution of the Working Committee February 1937.

‘The Congress stands for full personal, civil and democratic liberties in the whole of India including the States and will continue to struggle for the establishment of such liberties.’

—Resolution on Suppression of Civil Liberties passed
by the Faizpur Session December 1936.

‘In pursuit of its programme of release of political prisoners the Congress has not hesitated to sacrifice office and opportunity of passing ameliorative measures.’

—Resolution on Ministerial crisis in UP and
Bihar at Haripura Session, 1938.

September 1

Demands of Kisans and Workers

Pending the formulation of a fuller programme the Congress reiterates its declaration made at Karachi—that it stands for a reform of the system of land tenure and revenue and rent, and an equitable adjustment of the burden on agricultural land, giving immediate relief to the smaller peasantry by a substantial reduction of agricultural revenue now paid by them and exempting uneconomic holdings from payment of rent and revenue.

The question of indebtedness requires urgent consideration and the formulation of a scheme including the declaration of a moratorium, an enquiry into and scaling down of debts and the provision for cheap credit facilities by the state. This relief should extend to the agricultural tenants, peasant proprietors, small landholders and petty traders.

‘In regard to industrial workers the policy of the Congress is to secure to them a decent standard of living, hours of work and conditions of labour in conformity, as far as the economic conditions in the country permit with international standards, suitable machinery for the settlement of disputes between employers and workmen, protection against the economic consequences of old age sickness and unemployment and the right of workers to form unions and to strike for the protection of their interests.’

—From the Election Manifesto.

'Congress members should press for the carrying out of the Congress programme as enunciated in the Election Manifesto and the Congress agrarian resolution. In particular they should work for:

A substantial reduction in rent and revenue. Assessment of income-tax on a progressive scale on agricultural incomes subject to a prescribed minimum. Fixity of tenure. Relief from the burden of rural debt and arrears of rent and revenue. Eight hours day for industrial workers, without reduction of pay. Living wage. Unemployment relief'

'Congress Policy in the Legislatures.'

—Resolution of the Working Committee, Wardha,
February 27, 28 and March 1st, 1937.

The Congress is convinced that the final solution of this problem involves the removal of British Imperialistic exploitation and a radical change in the antiquated and repressive land tenure and revenue systems. It feels, however, that the deepening crisis has made the burden on the peasantry an intolerable one and immediate relief is urgently called for. Pending the framing of an All-India Agrarian Programme, therefore, the following steps are necessary:

1. Rent and revenue should be readjusted having regard to present conditions and there should be substantial reduction in both.
2. Uneconomic holdings should be exempted from rent or land tax.
3. Agricultural incomes should be assessed to income tax like all other incomes, on a progressive scale subject to a prescribed minimum.
4. Canal and other irrigation rates should be substantially lowered.
5. All feudal dues and levies and forced labour should be abolished and demands other than rent should be made illegal.
6. Fixity of tenure with heritable rights along with the right to build houses and plant trees should be provided for all tenants.
7. An effort should be made to introduce co-operative farming.
8. The crushing burden of rural debt should be removed. Special tribunals should be appointed to inquire into this and all debts, which are unconscionable or beyond the capacity of peasants to pay, should be liquidated. Meanwhile a moratorium should be declared and steps should be taken to provide cheap credit facilities.
9. Arrears of rent for previous years should generally be wiped out.
10. Common pasture-lands should be provided, and the rights, of the people in tanks, wells, ponds, forests and the like recognised and no encroachment on these rights should be permitted.
11. Arrears of rents should be recoverable in the same manners as civil debts and not by ejectment.
12. There should be statutory provision for securing a living wage and suitable working conditions for agricultural labourers.
13. Peasant unions should be recognised.

'Agrarian Programme'

—Resolution at Faizpur, 1936.

Resolution of the Labour Sub-Committee of the Working committee Re. Security to Labour on the following demands:

1. Legal obligation for adequate wages in industries receiving state aid.
2. Extension of Factory Act.

3. Stricter enforcement of the Factory Act.
4. Inquiry into the adequacy of wages.
5. Labour Exchanges.
6. Sick Leave.
7. Minimum (living) wage.
8. Machinery for settlement of disputes.
9. Recognition of such unions as believed in the Congress policy of using peaceful and legitimate means.
10. Housing of Labour.
11. Holidays with pay.
12. Insurance for old age and unemployment.

—Report of the Gen. Secy. to Haripura Congress.

September 2

War Resistance

'The Congress records its entire disapproval of the British Foreign policy culminating in the Munich Pact, the Anglo-Italian Agreement and the recognition of Rebel Spain. This policy has been one of deliberate betrayal of democracy, repeated breach of Pledges, the ending of the system of collective security and co-operation with Governments which are avowed enemies of democracy and freedom. As the result of this policy, the world is being reduced to a state of international anarchy, where brutal violence triumphs and flourishes unchecked and decides the fate of the nations, and in the name of peace stupendous preparations are being made for the most terrible of wars. International morality has sunk so low in Central and South-Western Europe that the world has witnessed with horror the organised terrorism of the Nazi Government against the people of the Jewish race and the continuous bombing from the air by Rebel forces of cities and their civilian inhabitants and of helpless refugees.

The Congress dissociates itself entirely from the British foreign policy which has consistently aided Fascist Powers and helped the destruction of democratic countries. The Congress is opposed to imperialism and fascism alike, and is convinced that world peace and progress require the ending of both of these. In the opinion of the Congress, it is urgently necessary for India to direct her own foreign policy as an independent nation, thereby keeping aloof from both imperialism and fascism and pursuing her path of peace and freedom.'

—From the Tripuri Resolution on Foreign Policy.

'India can be no party to such an imperialist war and will not permit her manpower and resources to be exploited in the interests of British Imperialism. Nor can India join any war without the express consent of her people. *The Congress, therefore, entirely disapproves of war preparations being made in India and large scale manoeuvres and air-raid precautions by which it has been sought to spread an atmosphere of approaching war in India.* In the event of an attempt being made to involve India in a war, this will be resisted.'

—From the Haripura Resolution on foreign policy and War danger.

September 3

Fight Against Federation

'The Congress has rejected the new constitution and declared that a constitution for India, which can be accepted by the people, must be based on independence and can only be framed by the people themselves by

means of a Constituent Assembly, without interference by any foreign authority. Adhering to this policy of rejection,—the Congress has, however, permitted the formation in the provinces of Congress Ministries with a view to strengthen the nation in its struggle for independence. In regard to the proposed Federation, no such considerations apply even provisionally or for a period, and the imposition of this Federation will do greater injury to India and tighten the bonds which hold her in subjection to imperialist domination. This scheme of Federation excludes from the sphere of responsibility, vital functions of government.

The Congress, therefore, reiterates its condemnation of the proposed Federal Scheme and calls upon the Provincial and Local Congress Committees and the people generally as well as the Provincial Governments and Ministries to prevent its inauguration. *In the event of an attempt being made to impose it, despite the declared will of the people, such an attempt must be combated in every way, and the Provincial Governments and Ministries must refuse to cooperate with it.*

—From the Haripura Resolution on Federation.

'The AICC is of the opinion that developments have justified the wisdom of the Congress resolution and warns the British Government against entertaining the hope that the Congress will ever submit to the imposition of Federation on the country against its declared will to the contrary.... The continuance of the irresponsible Government at the Centre is becoming intolerable and further prolongation may precipitate a crisis which all desire to postpone if at all possible.'

—From the AICC Resolution in Bombay, June, 1939.

September 4

Boycott of Foreign Cloth And British Goods

'The Committee calls upon all Congress organisations and the country at large to take more vigorous steps to bring about a complete boycott of British goods generally than have so far been taken by giving preference to goods of non-British manufacture wherever similar swadeshi goods are not available.'

—From the Working Committee Resolution, Allahabad, June 30, 1939.

The Pant Resolution recognised the sole leadership of Gandhiji. But the sole leader openly repudiates the Tripuri line of preparing for a nation-wide struggle. He says:

'If any mass movement is undertaken at the present moment in the name of non-violence, it will resolve itself into violence largely unorganised and organised in some cases. It will bring discredit on the Congress, spell disaster for Congress struggle for independence and bring ruin to many a house. This may be a wholly untrue picture born of my weakness. I cannot lead a movement which requires great strength and resolution.' (*Harijan*, 8 July 1939).

The alternative line which is being advocated through the columns of *Harijan* is fundamentally opposed to the policy implicit in the principal Congress resolutions. The *Harijan* line in essence amounts to this: (1) Purna Swaraj can be won through the 'experiment of office acceptance' and by avoiding mass-satyagraha and struggle; (2) non-violent atmosphere is required for the success of this experiment; (3) the creation of non-violent atmosphere means the suppression of extra parliamentary movement means the suppression of labour and kisan struggles, if need be by the use of violence of the police, law-courts, lathis and bullets; (4) struggle in the States must be stopped; responsible government and democratic rights can be won by the States' people by prostrating themselves before the Princes and pitching the demands low; (5) in order to strengthen and purify the Congress, it must only consist of true satyagrahis, who have implicit faith in God, the constructive programme and in non-violence (as interpreted by Gandhiji).

This is the line which our national leadership is trying to impose upon the Congress—a line which is opposed to the major political resolutions of the Congress since Faizpur. It is a line of constitutionalism and conciliation which can only end in compromise. It is a line of drift and disruption and can only bring us sure defeat. This policy is already resulting in the growing alienation of the labour and peasant masses from the Congress. The discontent among the toiling masses arising out of the non-fulfillment of their demands as laid down in the election manifesto and their indignation at the use of repressive measures by the Congress Ministers, is becoming the fruitful ground for communal disruption to thrive. Communal disruption is the direct fruit of the ministerial policy of appeasing the vested interests and of alienating the masses. The 'New Technique' in the States' People's movement can only result in the disruption of the struggle, in the intensified offensive of the Princes and the Paramount Power against the people. Finally, the drive towards a homogeneous Congress can only lead to the growth of factional struggle inside the Congress and to its split.

The urgent task before the entire Left and especially its socialist and communist vanguard is to fight to end this policy of drift and disruption and come forward as the champions of unity with the Congress for an immediate advance against the enemy. This must be the central slogan of the National Struggle Week this year. Seven main items of the Congress programme of struggle have been selected for the seven days of the week. Everyone of the items of the programme must be popularised on the basis of the Congress resolutions which we reprint elsewhere. As pointed out by the Left Consolidation Committee, in celebrating the National Struggle Week, 'we must seek the co-operation of all Congressmen irrespective of parties, for the issue is one of popularising the decisions taken by the Congress of strengthening the unity of the Congress and of preparing for a nation-wide struggle'.

On the First Day, we demand the unconditional release of the last batch of the Bengal prisoners; we declare our solidarity with any action the Bengal Provincial Committee decides to take in order to secure their release. We demand the release of Comrades Prithvi Singh, Gurumukh Singh and other political prisoners in the Punjab, and the release of Thakur Chandra Singh the Garhwal hero in UP. We demand the release of all labour and kisan prisoners in all the provinces and demand that pending their release they be treated as political prisoners.

On the Second Day, we urge for the rapid fulfillment of the demands of the workers and peasants as laid down in the Congress resolutions. We express our solidarity with the great All-India struggles of the textile workers, railway workers, which are in the offing, and with the kisan struggles in Behar and popularise the implications of the slogans: Congress-Labour Unity, Congress-Kisan Unity.

On the Third Day, we condemn Chamberlain's policy of war and of aiding fascism. We express our solidarity with the popular forces working for peace and democracy headed by the Soviet Union. We fraternise with the peoples of China, Spain and Czechoslovakia and other small nations whose independence is threatened or is destroyed by fascism. We condemn British war preparations and declare our resolve to inaugurate effective movement of war resistance.

On the Fourth Day, we declare our determination to resist Federation.

On the Fifth Day, we call upon the Textile merchants industrialists and the people generally to boycott British and Japanese cloth and yarn so as to overcome the present textile depression and avert the attack on the wages and the standard of living of the textile workers.

On the Sixth Day, we fraternise with the fight of the States' people for responsible government and for civil liberties and democratic rights. We condemn the atrocities of Princes and the Paramount Power and demand the speedy co-ordination of their struggle with the Indian people's fight against Federation and War.

On the Seventh Day, we popularise the central slogan of the National Struggle week:
Unity of the nation and the congress for an immediate advance for a nation-wide struggle.
For complete independence.
For a Free and Democratic India.
Down with War and Federation.

September 5

Demands of States People

'The Congress welcomes the awakening of the people of Indian States in many parts of the country, and considers this as a hopeful prelude to a larger freedom, comprising the whole of India, for which the Congress has laboured. The Congress supports the demand for responsible government and civil liberty in the States and expresses its solidarity with these movements for freedom and self-expression, which are integral parts of the larger struggle....'

'.... The Congress has always possessed the right as it is its duty to guide the people of the States and lead them with its influence. The great awakening that is taking place among the people of the States may lead to a relaxation or to the complete removal of the restraint which the Congress imposed upon itself, thus resulting in an ever-increasing identification of the Congress with the States people.'

The Congress desired to reiterate that its objective, Complete Independence, is for the whole of India inclusive of the States, which are integral parts of India which cannot be separated and which must have the same measure of political, social and economic freedom as the rest of India.'

—From the Tripuri Resolution on Indian States

September 6

National Demand and Unity

'The Congress declares afresh its solemn resolve to achieve Independence for the nation and to have a constitution framed for a free India through a Constituent Assembly elected by the people and without any interference by a foreign authority. No other constitution or attempted solutions of the problem can be accepted by the Indian people. The Congress is of the opinion that, in view of the situation in India, the organised strength of the national movement, the remarkable growth of the consciousness of the masses, the new awakening among the people of the Indian States as well as the rapid development of the world situation, *the time has come for the full application of the principle of self-determination to India so that the people of India might establish an independent democratic state by means of a Constituent Assembly.* Not only the inherent right and the dignity of the people demand this full freedom, but also the economic and other problems which press insistently on the masses cannot find a solution, nor can India get rid of her poverty and keep pace with modern progress unless the people have full opportunities of self-development and growth which independence alone can give. *Provincial Autonomy affords no such scope for development and its capacity for good is being rapidly exhausted the proposed Federation strangles India still further and will not be accepted. The Congress, therefore, is firmly of opinion that the whole of the Government of India Act must give place to the constitution of a free India made by the people themselves.'*

'An Independent and democratic India will face the solution of our great problems rapidly and effectively and will line herself with the progressive peoples of the world and thus aid the cause of democracy and freedom.'

'With a view to the speedy realization of the Congress objective and in order to face effectively the national and international crises that loom ahead and to prepare the country for a nation-wide

struggle this congress calls upon all parts of the Congress organisation as well as the Congress Provincial Governments and the people generally to prepare themselves to this end, to promote unity and seek to eliminate disruptive forces and conditions which lead to communal conflicts and National disunity, by co-ordinating the activities of the Provincial Governments with the work outside the legislatures and by strengthening the organisation so as to make it an effective organ of the people's will.'

—From the Tripuri Resolution on National Demand

'Conditions in India have reached a stage of stalemate which is detrimental to the progress of the country and deterioration is inevitable unless its rapid advance is made. *We cannot merely wait for the British Government to impose federation so that we might combat it and thereby seek to reach our objective. It is necessary for us to devise means to do so apart from any action taken by the British Government.* In the opinion of the Working Committee the situation in the world and in India urgently demands in the interests of our people as well as of world peace and freedom that Indian independence be recognised and steps be taken to establish it.'

—From the Statement of the Working Committee read by the Congress President at the opening of the AICC session in Bombay, June 1939

23. India and the War

Editorial, *Hitavada*, 1 September 1939

1 September 1939

The grave international situation has cast its ominous shadow over India. This is inevitable, because India being vitally connected with the international developments, the outbreak of another world war is bound to seriously affect the destinies of this country. But for some reason or other we find in this country a peculiar kind of complacent cynicism prevalent among even the usually well-informed sections of the population. Hence, despite the acute tension that recent developments have caused all over the world, it appears that, we in India are not so much alive to the gravity of the situation as we ought to have been. This is partly due to an unconscious belief at the back of our minds that somehow there is not going to be a war. The belief is not based upon any rhyme or reason and if we are asked to explain it, we will be simply unable to say, why we held it. But it cannot be denied that quite a large number of people in India are only casually interested in the recent international developments and are not prepared to seriously think over the question of the fate of India in the event of a war. This is the reason why the recent extraordinary measures undertaken by the Government of India have left us somewhat unmoved. This is a sorry state of things and if tomorrow the war really breaks out it is practically going to take us almost unawares. It is, therefore, necessary that we in this country should shake off this dangerous self-complacency and face the grim facts of the situation. While this is the first duty of every responsible citizen of this country, it is equally imperative that, we as a country should speak with one voice at this critical hour. So far, beyond the individual statements of a few politicians in the country there has been no attempt to define our attitude, as a nation, towards the international developments. It is now high time that such an attempt is made at the earliest possible opportunity. In particular, in every other country we find that a genuine effort to bring about complete national unity in the face of the impending disaster is being made. In Britain, plans for constituting a National Cabinet representing all parties in the country are ready. In France and other countries similar efforts are going on. But unfortunately for us, in this country we have no such plans ready. The Princes are

speaking individually. The Muslim League has expressed its own opinion in the light of its sectional and communal interests.¹ And the Congress, on account of the recent controversy between Rightists and Leftists is a house divided against itself. It is detrimental to the interests of India, nay, even suicidal, to allow this situation to continue any longer. Before long an attempt must be made to bring about complete national unity in our ranks, if we want to live as a nation. Only on the basis of such a unity can we define our attitude towards the present international situation in clear and unmistakable language. It is too much to hope that our national leaders will not fail to rise to the occasion?

¹ The resolution of the Muslim League's Working Committee on the war crisis stated that the British Government should redress Muslims' grievances and satisfy their demands in order to elicit effective cooperation from them. It made clear that the League would not accept any scheme of constitutional advance unless previously approved by the League. The principal demand urged upon the British Government apart from future constitutional reforms, was that they should direct the Governors 'to exercise their special powers where any Provincial Ministry fails to secure justice and fair-play to the Musalmans or where they resort to oppression or interference with their political, economic, social and cultural rights, in accordance with the sacred promises, assurances and declarations repeatedly made by Great Britain in consequence of which these special powers were expressly embodied in the Statute.' So far, stated the Working Committee, 'these special powers have remained dominant and obsolete and the Governors have failed to protect the right of the Musalmans.' This resolution was criticised by, among others, Asaf Ali. In a statement published in the *Hindustan Times* of 20 September, he observed: 'The self contradictory patching and padding of the statement robs it even of consistency. Distrust of democracy appears to be the central idea of their statement, while democracy is the life breath of Islamic ideology, and even the British and French democracies are seeking to rally the world in the name of democracy. Again, such contradictions as "freedom of India" and the exercise of special powers by Governors and the Viceroy vitiate each other.' The Delhi leader continued: 'If the League has differences with the Congress they are so obviously of a domestic nature that they can very easily be disposed of in an amicable manner, and the invocation of a third party's intervention is manifestly out of place. The whole statement breathes an atmosphere of helplessness, indecision and petulance, which seems to be the unwelcome fruit of compromises among leaders and is inconsistent with the claim that the League Working Committee is the custodian of the honour and interests of nine crores of Muslims.'

24. India and the War

Editorial, *Independent India*, 3 September 1939

3 September 1939

[Extracts]

...The international situation has been receiving the attention of our leaders lately. We have been urged by some of them to think in terms of the world situation to approach our problems in the light of a proper appreciation of international conditions. The Congress has passed many resolutions on various international events. On the question of war danger alone its resolutions have been numerous giving us a broader outlook on things. They have not, however, indicated exactly what the Congress proposes to do to keep India out of imperialist wars and to resist all efforts for dragging her into other people's quarrels. So long as India remains a part of the British Empire—and with all the proudly advertised illusion of running parallel governments, she still remains in that shameful position. India will be compelled to be a party to any war that British imperialism chooses to make. That being the case, it is not an easy matter to keep India out of imperialist wars, unless the resistance to that purposes will amount to a revolt against imperialist domination. No resolution of the Congress has opened up that perspective. Consequently they have no greater significance than that of so many bargaining counters and very weak ones at that.

The resolution of the last meeting of the Working Committee¹ declares that 'the Congress has further clearly enunciated its policy in the event of war, and declared its determination to oppose all attempts to impose a war on India. The Committee is bound by this policy of the Congress and

will give effect to it, so as to prevent the exploitation of Indian resources for imperialist ends.' On the face of it, it sounds very good. But as far as we know no clear policy has ever been enunciated. As a matter of fact, this latest resolution itself is not free from ambiguity. In the case of a war, Indian resources will not be exclusively used for imperialist ends. Of course, ultimately, imperialism will be benefited if it succeeds in securing Indian support. But certain sections of the Indian population will be immensely benefited as the immediate consequence of any war; and their benefit also will result from the exploitation of Indian resources. Those sections of the Indian people who stand to make profit out of a war, would certainly not support the 'determination to oppose all attempts to impose a war on India'. On the other hand, as it happens to be, those people wield a great influence on Congress politics. Consequently, at the last moment it may be realised that India would gain economically by lending her support to the cause of 'democracy and freedom' ...

In spite of all the resolutions of the Congress, the imperialist government has already taken definite steps for involving India into a possible war. Indian troops have been sent outside the country.² The Working Committee resolution protests against this action, and the protest will take the form of Congress members boycotting the coming session of the Central Legislative Assembly. But the cat has jumped out of the bag very inconveniently. It is maintained from official quarters that the party leaders were informed about the movement of troops. Naturally efforts will be made to find technical flaws in the bureaucratic procedure for saving face. The suspected connivance with the dispatch of Indian troops abroad by itself may be dismissed as a petty matter. But it is important as the straw indicating which way the wind blows....

It is easy to surmise what the present leaders of the Congress will do in case of a war. It is not so much what they will do; the question is what they can do. The motive is not at all at issues. With the very best of motives, one cannot act otherwise than determined by the limitations of the given conditions and preconceived notions with which the problem is approached. Wedded to the Gandhist philosophy, the present leadership of the Congress cannot possibly travel the way to an effective resistance to imperialism. Therefore, it must make a virtue of necessity. Gandhian politics, in the last analysis, cannot be constitutionalism. Therefore, the entire policy of the present Congress leadership is to manoeuvre for a position where it will be possible to make the most favourable bargain as regards the conditions for Congressmen accepting office also in the center. It is very easily seen that, in the case of a major military conflict involving British imperialism, the latter will be compelled to come to terms with the Congress, without whose co-operation it will find itself in a very precarious position in India. That being the case from the point of view of the present leaders of the Congress, a war involving Britain should be welcome. It would enable them to carry out their policy successfully. But will that be beneficial for India? That is another question which must occupy the mind of the average Congressmen throughout the country.

Let there be no illusion. Let us have the courage to face facts. Nearly a year ago, the AICC meeting at Delhi passed a resolution in which it was suggested that the Congress would be prepared to cooperate with the introduction of some form of responsibility in the Centre, provided that imperialism did not insist on enforcing the Federal Scheme as it is. It seems that negotiations have been going on in that direction. Soon after the last AICC meeting in Bombay, Gandhiji in an interview to an American press correspondent,³ declared that he wanted self-government; the British Government may call it Dominion Status; he would not quarrel over words. A few days later, on the point of leaving for England the leader of the Congress party in the Central Assembly⁴ repeated that declaration. Those facts are significant, and cannot be altogether disregarded.

The passage quoted from the resolution of the last meeting of the Working Committee practically commits the Congress not only to help, but encourage war time instrumentality of popular Ministers.

In other words, should they be conceded a partnership in the matter, the present leaders of the Congress would cooperate with British imperialism in the case of a war 'for democracy and freedom'. It is rumoured that an emergency meeting of the Working Committee will take place shortly, to decide upon Congress policy in case of the imminent outbreak of war. It is also rumoured that the Congress leaders would demand an assurance that the principle of self-government will be applied to India as the condition for their cooperation with imperialism in distress. The provincial governments are subordinated to the Central Government as regards military affairs. Should the latter also be handed over to a Congress Ministry—some sort of a coalition, at any rate—the condition under which according to its last resolution, the Working Committee will be prepared to encourage war measures, would be fulfilled. In the case of a major war, it is almost certain that such an agreement will be made.

That is the immediate perspective. It is better that we are led in the direction with our eyes open, if we cannot prevent it. It is utterly useless to talk tall and thereby create the illusion that something resounding is going to happen in the near future. Some Leftists have talked most vociferously about the war danger, and given out continuous clarion calls for struggle. But today, they are helpless. Even if they had their own way, they would not do any better. This is proved by Subhas Chandra Bose's latest statement in reply to Gandhi's justifying the disciplinary action against him. He criticizes 'the weak-kneed policy of the Congress', and pleads with the Working Committee that the 'present opportunity is utilised by the Congress for winning purna swaraj for India'. But the concrete suggestion he made is, to 'take up with the British Government the issue of India's National Demand'. The weak-kneed Working Committee is exactly moving in that direction. Something more than agitation is necessary to arrest the fateful course. But unfortunately, if the war breaks out without much delay, there seems to be little chance of India being benefited by it. A certain section of our population will of course be benefited. But India as a whole can utilize a major military conflict involving British imperialism only by asserting her right of self-determination not by 'taking up the national Demand' with her foreign rulers, but by her own might. She must have self-confidence if she wants to be free.

¹ Resolution passed by Congress Working Committee at Wardha on 9-12 August 1939

² The Indian troops were sent to Egypt and Singapore.

³ According to the version in the *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, the interview took place in mid-May and not in June. In an interview with Steel of *The New York Times*, Gandhi had said 'if dominion status could be so defined as to cover a case like India and if India could come to a honourable agreement with England, I would not quarrel about words'.

⁴ Bhulabhai Desai

25. India Must Resist War

Editorial, *National Front*, 3 September 1939

3 September 1939

We are again in the midst of a war-crisis far more serious than in September last. Europe has become one vast parade ground, with tens of the thousands under arms. Mobilisation, troop movements, frontier clashes, emergency decrees and the measures—in short, every thing short of the final irrevocable step—are being rapidly accomplished to get ready for the final burst-up.

In this critical situation India as a nation is yet thoroughly 'unprepared to discharge her duty towards herself and other democracies. In spite of her declared opposition to War, British Imperialism is determined to exploit her men and money to fight the battle of the Empire. Simla still boasts that it has only to press the button to place India on a war footing.

The strategy of imperialism is to act with swift strokes and completely paralyse whatever resistance to war there exists. Ordinances against war-resisters are ready.¹ Plans to crush mass-activities have been thoroughly laid. Round-up of Left elements is openly talked about. Press censorship is even now openly mentioned.

Side by side with this the enemies of Indian freedom and other anti-national elements are mobilized to popularize and strengthen the war plans of British Imperialism. The Indian Princes have started chanting the loyalty *mantram*. Communal elements like Sir Sikander Hayat Khan have openly declared themselves in favour of support to British Imperialism.² And finally, come the Indian Liberals who are urging support to Imperialism in the name of democracy and freedom.

On the popular side there is an attitude of self-complacency which is nothing but criminal. On the 11th of August the Working Committee of the Congress met and reiterated the nation's opposition to war. It asked the Congress ministries not to participate in war-preparations and decided upon the boycott of the Central Assembly to demonstrate its protest against the dispatch of Indian troops.

But the Working Committee gave no directives to the people, to the nation. It did not take a single step towards developing sanction behind the anti-war resolution. In spite of the grave situation, it refrained from summoning the people to upset the plank of British Imperialism and develop mass-resistance. There was no call for protest, for hartal, for demonstration.

On the contrary, the resolution of the Working Committee followed by the decision of the Prime Ministers' Conference,³ makes it abundantly clear that the national leadership is positively unwilling to adopt mass-resistance for defeating Imperialist war-plans. At best its attitude is one of passive non-cooperation or neutrality. In reality, it seeks to secure better terms of peace with Imperialism, peace bought on the basis of paltry political concessions.

The refusal to give a call to the people, the anxiety with which a gesture from Imperialism is awaited, the loose talk about neutrality—all these point only in one direction: the High Command does not think in terms of immediate struggle against Imperialism and War.

There is no dearth of cajoling efforts on the part of British Imperialism. Mouthpieces of Imperialism like the *Times of India* and *The Statesman* are pleading that Congress should help British in saving democracy and peace. They condemn Sjt Bose, the Socialists and Communists who stand for an effective policy of war-resistance.

The Viceroy it is reported may issue an appeal to National leaders to forget differences in face of the war emergency. The bait of political concessions is to be held forth to buy India's support to war.

Thus at a critical moment when it is weakest, when it cannot withstand the powerful blow of a united people, Imperialism attempts to split popular ranks, by cajoling and threatening them, by alternately crushing them or holding out false promises to them.

These are alarming developments which spell disaster for the future of our country. To bargain with Imperialism at this critical juncture, to refuse to summon the masses for immediate resistance to War, is to be a willing party to India's slavery.

The Congress has repeatedly declared its opposition and hostility to War. The resolutions of the Congress are unambiguous and mean only one thing. India will strike and strike hard if War is forced on her; she will not bargain but settle her accounts with British Imperialism once for all. That is the only interpretation that can be put on the Congress resolutions on War.

The time has come to act in the spirit of these resolutions. The situation has gone beyond wordy resolutions. We are on the point of being entrapped by the war and emergency measures. Even without a compromise, British Imperialism is in a position to strike at us before we can open our counter-offensive. But the situation can yet be saved. The Working Committee holds the fate

of the nation in its hands. It has only to declare to the people that the day of reckoning has come. It has only to summon the people to effective action to call Simla's bluff.⁴

The coming meeting of the Working Committee must give a stirring call to the people to forget all differences and get ready for the fray. India-wide hartal against War must be the first step in the coordination of the anti-war resistance.

At the same time it must be made clear to the Government that under no circumstances will India permit a War being imposed on her. India does not trust Britain. The British Government headed by Chamberlain has betrayed Abyssinia. It has betrayed Spain. It sold Czechoslovakia to Hitler. It is betraying China every day. It encouraged Nazi aggression and is responsible for the growing outrages of the Fascist Powers. Reminding the Indian people of these outrages on democracy, the Working Committee must tear to pieces the hypocritical plea of imperialism that it is fighting in the cause of democracy. A Government which holds India in bondage cannot be trusted to fight for the liberties of any people; such must be the clear verdict of the Working Committee.

The Working Committee must instruct the Ministries to function as anti-war ministries. From their strategic positions they must fight the Imperialist preparations and challenge the Governors to dismiss them.

Finally, the Congress Committees and the people should be asked to carry on anti-recruitment and anti-war campaigns, campaigns against export of war material; campaigns against subscription to war loans.

Equally important and urgent is the task of strengthening national unity at this critical juncture. If war-resistance has any meaning the fire against the Left must cease. The disunity in Congress ranks created by unfortunate decisions must yield place to impregnable unity. The Congress must once more stand forth as the fortress of the people's unity.

India expects the Working Committee to give the lead; it expects that our national leadership will throw all hesitations over-board and strike the decisive blow for India's freedom.

Twenty-five years back India supported Britain's righteous war against Germany. Gandhiji and other leaders fell into the trap and rendered every help to the Government.

India had to pay heavily for that error. The crawling orders of General Dyer,¹ the Jallianwala Bagh massacres, and the Rowlatt Acts were the fruits reaped by India for the unforgettable error of 1914.

Today after 25 years of struggle, we cannot allow a repetition of the ghastly misdeeds against our country. The meeting of the Working Committee may not take place. We may be engulfed in War before we are ready to meet it. Our best fighters may be in jail before they get the chance to act. Our ranks may be temporarily disorganized. But India's determination to resist War must not be slackened. Imperialism cannot crush the Congress out of existence. And as long as there is a single Congressman, as long as there are millions of our countrymen full of hatred against imperialism war-resistance must continue.

With the masses entering the arena it will not be long before resistance develops into the day of reckoning settling all the old accounts once for all.

¹ On 3 September the British Government declared War against Germany. On the same day there was promulgated the Defence of India Ordinance, providing for trial by Special Tribunals, arming the Government with dictatorial powers over every department of national life, abolishing all freedom of speech, press and association and even movement. This decree, placing the nation under virtual martial law, was issued by the Viceroy without consulting the central Legislature.

On the 6th of April—nearly five months before the outbreak of war—a Bill was introduced in the House of Commons amending the Government of India Act. The amendment was 'designed to remove in the event of war, serious deficiencies.... In the powers intended to be made available by Sec. 102 of the Government of India Act to the Central

Government.' The AICC that met on the 29th and 30th of April and 1st of May adopted a resolution declaring the opposition of the Congress to the Amendment which 'strikes at the very basis of Provincial Autonomy and renders it a farce in case of war; which, in effect, creates a war dictatorship of the Central Government in India and which makes the Provincial Governments helpless agents of Imperialism.' The AICC warned the British Government that 'any attempt to impose such an amendment on India must and will be resisted in every way open to the Congress.'

⁴ In a statement to the press, he said: 'There is no room for vacillation or doubt. As a self-respecting and God-fearing people we must unequivocally throw in our lot with the nations which stand for justice, righteousness and self-determination for all, strong and weak alike. In this war Indians will not be called upon to fight imperialistic battles of Great Britain. It is her own safety she must assure; her own hearths she must preserve against the aggression of covetous invaders from both East and West and she must seek, if possible to carry the war beyond her outposts and there vanquish her enemies lest they set their harrying and plundering foot on the Indian soil'.

'So far as the Punjab is concerned, I need do no more than repeat the assurance which I gave on behalf of the province, in September last, when I guaranteed that the manpower and resources of the Punjab will be unhesitatingly and ungrudgingly placed at the disposal of Great Britain and her allies, in the service of our Motherland and for the sacred cause of justice, righteousness and freedom. I repeat this offer is made with no sinister bargaining intent, but on behalf of a self-respecting and brave people who prefer their hand of friendship and cooperation in a spirit of mutual confidence and trust. If unfortunately a war cannot be avoided, then the Punjab will rise as one man to fight the enemies of peace and freedom—their motto—'For my God, my country and my house'.

⁵ The Conference was held at Poona on 26–30 August under the Presidentship of Vallabhbhai Patel.

⁶ That the Government only had to press the button to place India on a war footing.

⁷ R.E.X. Dyer (1864–1927); the ill-famed officer in Punjab who was responsible for the slaughter of hundreds of innocent people who had gathered in Jallianwala Bagh in Amritsar to protest against the Rowlatt Bills.

26. Defence of India Ordinance, 3 September 1939

Bombay Chronicle, 4 September 1939

The following communique has been issued:—Consequent on the outbreak of war with Germany, a calamity which is well known to all who have studied the events of the past weeks, His Majesty's Government have done everything possible by concession, conciliation and persuasion to avert, the Governor-General has to-day promulgated the defence of India Ordinance and Rules.

Powers of Executive

The provisions of this Ordinance and of the Rules are designed to meet the special case of war. They have been framed solely with a view to securing the Defence of India and the public safety and although of necessity the powers which they confer upon the Executive Authority of Government are far-reaching they are designed only to serve the following general purpose which must be paramount in war:

- (A) To secure priority for military requirements.
- (B) To counteract enemy activities in India (including activities likely to assist the enemy).
- (C) To enable defence measures to be carried out without impediment; and
- (D) To permit such other control over the activities of the public as is necessary for the common safety and welfare in war conditions.

While then the Ordinance will be strictly enforced against His Majesty's enemies and any persons who assist them, the general public have no cause for apprehension, though it is necessary that they should acquaint themselves with the scope of the provisions.

Public Safety

Section 15 of the Ordinance expressly directs that any Authority acting under the Ordinance shall interfere with the ordinary avocations of life and the enjoyment of property as little as may be consonant with the purpose of ensuring the public safety and interests and the defence of British India.

The powers assumed under this Ordinance have been found by expenditure to be necessary; and for the most part they merely resume powers which were taken in India during the last war by various Ordinances and the Defence of Indian Act, 1915, and in the United Kingdom by the Defence of the Realm Act and regulations made there under. In their present form they were based directly upon the provisions of these enactments but, since it is hoped that conditions in India will not demand many of the restrictions necessary in the United Kingdom, they do not in fact cover so wide a field as the corresponding regulations which His Majesty's Government may introduce.

Penal Provisions

While it is necessary and inevitable that in a war emergency the State should, in the interest of the whole community, assume a greater degree of control over the conduct of individual citizens than in times of peace.

It is the earnest hope of the Governor-General that it will not be necessary to employ the penal sanctions provided in the Ordinance and Rules.

As has been stated above, the Penal and Restrictive Provisions are directed solely against action which may interfere with the successful prosecution of the war; and those of his Majesty's subjects who pursue their normal advocations and avoid action which may assist the enemy directly or indirectly have nothing to fear—AP

Rules under Ordinance

The Rules issued under the ordinance provide for:

Ensuring the safety and welfare of His Majesty's forces, ships and aircraft, and preventing the prosecution of any purpose likely to prejudice the operations of His Majesty's forces or the forces of His Majesty's allies:

Prohibiting anything likely to prejudice the training, discipline or health of His Majesty's forces;

Preventing any attempt to tamper with the loyalty of persons in or to dissuade persons from entering, the service of His Majesty;

Dealings with Enemy

Preventing anything likely to assist the enemy or to prejudice the successful conduct of war, including:

- (A) Communications with the enemy or agents of the enemy.
- (B) Acquisition, possession and publication of information likely to assist the enemy.
- (C) Contribution to participation in or assistance in, the floating of loans raised by or on behalf of the enemy and
- (D) Advance of money to, or contracts or commercial dealings with the enemy, subjects or persons residing, carrying on business or being, in enemy territory.

Preventing the spread of false reports or the prosecution of any purpose likely to come disaffection or alarm, or to prejudice His Majesty's relations with Foreign Powers, or to promote feelings of enmity and hatred between different classes of His Majesty's subjects.

Conduct of Persons

Requiring the publication of news and information. Regulating the conduct of persons in respect of areas the control of which is considered necessary or expedient, and the removal of persons from such areas. Requiring any person or class of persons to comply with a scheme of defence.

Ensuring the safety of ports, dockyards, light houses, lightships, aerodromes, railways, telegraphs, post offices, signaling apparatus and all other means of communication, sources of water supply works for the supply of water, gas or electricity and any other place or thing the protecting of which is necessary or the defence of British India.

Apprehension and Detention

The apprehension and detention in custody of any person reasonably suspected of being of hostile origin or association, or of having acted, acting or being about to act, in a manner prejudicial to the public safety or interests or to the defence of British India, the prohibition of such person from entering or residing or remaining in any area, and the compelling of such person to reside and remain in any area, or to do, or abstain from doing, anything.

The control of persons entering, departing from, or traveling in, British India, and of foreigners residing or being in British India.

Prohibiting or regulating traffic and the use of vessels, buoys, lights and signals, in ports and territorial.

27. India and the War

Linlithgow to Zetland, 5 September 1939, Zetland Papers, Acc. No. 1972, NAI

[Extracts]

1. ... Though I am anxious to shepherd all the Muslims into the same fold so far as the prosecution of the war is concerned. I am not too much disturbed by this. I got the impression that Jinnah feels a little less secure than he is anxious to suggest, and whether that could be the case or not, I am perfectly clear in my own mind that we have whole-hearted support of the Punjab, while Fazlul Huq also publicly lent his support to our attitude in the statement referred to in my last letter.¹ The Sikh attitude is difficult to judge only because of the difficulty with which you are so familiar of finding any accredited spokesman from among them; but I feel every confidence that they are, broadly speaking, as whole-heartedly with us as the Punjab Muslims. I have asked Craik² to come to dine quietly with me and will have a word with him too as to what Sikh leader or leaders could appropriately be invited to come to see me. I think that old Sir Sunder Singh Majithia, though he is now growing rather old, probably commands as much respect as any. Ujjal Singh,³ who came to see me on Saturday, was vigorous in his protestations of support; but I am not quite certain how great a weight he now carries; and I suspect that he speaks for only a relatively small section of the Sikhs. Aney, who I saw this morning, was most friendly (actually he and the Congress Nationalists are at the moment attending the Assembly in defiance of instructions in a contrary sense from the Working Committee). Europeans I need say nothing of, for their support is of course assured; but I am again seeing Aikman⁴ tomorrow. Equally we can rely on the Anglo-Indians and I hope to see Gidney⁵ also tomorrow.

2. The Princely response has been as good as one would have expected it to be; and we have every reason to be satisfied there. I have been very anxious to have the Chancellor or some other representative Prince and Princes up to see me; but Glancy's⁶ advice is against this on the ground that the Princes have made their offer and have been thanked publicly for their offer; and that

there is so little to say to them if one does bring them up that it is hardly worthwhile doing so. I am not wholly convinced by this, and I think that despite Glancy's view, it would be wise for me without much further delay to see some Princely representative; but for the moment I am marking time.

3. Now for my talks with Gandhi and with Jinnah, I am sending you the records which I have prepared somewhat hastily of both these conversations by the present bag. I have telegraphed to you a very brief record of the impression left on me of my talk with Gandhi, and I am also sending you today a brief telegraphic warning of the general line of a statement which the old man proposes to issue and which he was good enough to send me to look at before its release to the Press. I do not really think that I need add very much to my record of my talk except to say that I could not help myself being profoundly moved by the emotion which I see he proposes publicly to mention in his article for the Press. His whole attitude could not have been better, and in his conversation he showed the same breadth of approach, and the same disinclination to trouble about minor and subsidiary issues I have always noticed in him. I felt bound, given the correspondence which has passed between us, to be perfectly categorical with him that there was no commitment of any sort which I could enter into as regards the future; and he took that as I remarked on the note of my talk very well indeed. I cannot believe in fact that he would have been likely to strike a ruckster's bargain at this stage. I did not on the other hand hint as you will see that, to the extent that the circumstances might disclose some necessity for some special arrangements for consultation so as to keep us in touch with public opinion during the war, my mind was open though I thought it far too early to consider any such possibility in detail if at all. What I had in mind of course was in particular this matter of defence liaison on which I am not without hope that we may be able to reach some satisfactory arrangement. The Chief has reacted rather better than I thought likely at first, and I am sending you a copy of the interim reply I have had from him by this bag. What effect Gandhi and this view will have on the Working Committee meeting which is now under summons, it is of course impossible to say. But I still think that his personal prestige and his authority are so great that he should be able to stand up to very strong opposition. I suspect too that in releasing his statement to the Press he is anxious to pave the way for the Committee's meeting. He has of course guarded himself very carefully in that statement, and does not go as far in some ways as he did in our conversation. But I have very little doubt that his tactics are wise ones.

4. The conversation with Jinnah was again characteristic. Sikander had sent me a message shortly before I saw him that nothing should be done to inflate him or make him more difficult to deal with, and repeating that the Punjab and Bengal were wholly behind us in the prosecution of war, whatever Jinnah and his friends may say. That of course I accept as the case. But here always in dealing with these political leaders, I felt it wiser to be patient with Jinnah and endeavour to lead him into the direction which we desire; and if indeed I can give any help to these Muslim leaders to get more together than they are at the moment, I will do so. But I may remark in parenthesis that I have a feeling that there are good many hounds at the moment on Jinnah's heels among his co-religionists. That however is a matter of internal Muslim politics, and our concern must of course be to secure all the support that we can so long as we do so without giving rise to false expectation and misunderstandings in our objective of the conduct of the war. With him also, as you will observe, I was careful to make it clear that I was not bargaining and that I was holding out no hopes of entering into any commitments of any sort. His suggestion that in the interest of securing support of him, Jinnah, and his friend, one should go to the point of driving the Congress Ministries out of office is characteristic.

5. Gandhi, as you will see, urged that I should see as many people, as possible, and in that I am sure he is right. I will certainly, now that consultations are on a broader basis, make a move to Rajendra Prasad as soon as Rajendra Prasad's health is better, and I will write a little later to Nehru. Sikander I shall hope to see again within the next day or two.

¹ Fazlul Haq issued the statement on 25 August.

² Henry Duffield Craig (1876–1955); educated at Eton and Pembroke College, Oxford, entered ICS in 1898 and served in Punjab as settlement officer, session judge and secretary to government; governor of Punjab (1938–1941) following a four-year stint (1934–38) as Home Member of the governor general's executive council. He was political advisor to the Viceroy during 1941–43.

³ Sardar Ujjal Singh (b. 1895); a close associate of Sir Sunder Singh Majithia (1872–1941) in the Chief Khalsa Diwan; elected to the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee; represented the Sikhs at the first and second Round Table Conference in London; member of the Constituent Assembly. After independence Ujjal Singh held various portfolios in the Punjab government and served as governor of Madras.

⁴ Alexandar Aikman (b. 1866); member of the Bengal Board of Economic Enquiry (1933–38), and leader of the European block in the legislative assembly from 1936 to 1940.

⁵ This probably refers to Dr. Gidney (1873–1942), who joined the Indian Medical Service in 1898, served in China and the NWF Province, and was member of the Central Advisory Board of Health in 1937.

⁶ Reginald Glancy (b. 1874); entered the ICS in 1896; settlement officer in Bannu (1903) before joining the Nizam's service (1911–21) as finance member; agent to the governor-general in the Central India (1924–29).

28. Jinnah and the War

Linlithgow to Zetland, 5 September 1939, Linlithgow Papers, Acc. No. 1972, NAI

[Extracts]

The conversation with Jinnah was again characteristic. Sikander had sent me a message shortly before I saw him that nothing should be done to inflate him or make him more difficult to deal with, and repeating that the Punjab and Bengal were behind us in the prosecution of the war, whatever Jinnah and his friend may say. That of course I accept as the case. But here as always in dealing with these political leaders, I felt it wiser to be patient with Jinnah and endeavour to lead him into the direction which we desire and if indeed I can give any help to these Muslim leaders to get more together than they are at the moment, I will do so. But I may remark in parenthesis that I have a feeling that there are good many hounds at the moment on Jinnah's heels among his co-religionists. That however is a matter of internal Muslim politics, and our concern must of course be to secure all the support that we can so long as we do so without giving rise to false expectation and misunderstandings in our objective of the conduct of the war. With him also, as you will observe, I was careful to make it clear that I was not bargaining and that I was holding out no hopes of entering into any commitments of any sort. His suggestion that in the interest of securing support of him, Jinnah, and his friend, one should go to the point of driving the Congress Ministries out of office is characteristic.

29. Congress Socialist Party and the War

Jayaprakash Narayan's statement, C. Rajagopalachari Papers (2), NMML

6 September 1939

[Extracts]

The National Executive of the All India Congress Socialist Party, meeting at Lucknow on 6 September 1939, adopted a statement on the War in the course of which it said:

War, which the people of every country abhor and which they had hoped to avert has at last overtaken us.... It is not a War to save democracy or to uphold high ideals of civilisation but an imperialist War between rival groups of capitalists who wish to rule the world.

The Committee notes with great concern that War propaganda seems to have already affected sections of the Indian public and that even Gandhi has failed to see anything behind the obvious fact of the invasion of Poland. The Viceroy the other day appealed to the Indian people in the name of international justice, morality, and democracy and asked them to help Britain to destroy the menace of 'rule by force'.... It is strange that the Viceroy, who represents in his office the most comprehensive negation of democracy that exists anywhere, should appeal to us in the name of that great ideal....

If Britain persists in holding India in bondage, India's only contribution to the cause of democracy and international justice can be to put an end to British imperialism that rules here by force and to establish a free democracy of the people of the country....

Fortunately for the people, the position of the Congress regarding Britain's imperialist War is clear. The Congress has again and again declared in an unequivocal manner that in the event of War India will resist the utilization of its resources for war purposes. This policy has now to be carried into practice....

Since this statement was issued, the Congress Working Committee has spoken its mind. The Congress Socialist Party desires to repeat the resolution of the Working Committee to defer a final decision till the All-India Congress Committee meets on 7 October. It desires to avoid striking a discordant note and desists from any criticism of the Working Committee's stand. At the same time, in fairness to the principles and to those who look to it for guidance, it cannot refrain from making it clear that *the party stands four squares for unconditional resistance to War and will press for it at the meeting of the AICC.*

The Congress Socialist Party is at one with Gandhi in feeling that this is neither the issue nor the occasion on which to bargain with the British Government. But the only conclusion of such an approach, consistent with the Congress objective and adherence to 'peaceful and legitimate means' appears to us to be not an offer of cooperation with Britain at War but unconditional resistance to War. *We cannot conceive of any gesture or connection on part of the British Government that could possibly justify the Congress in supporting the imperialist War.*

The Congress Socialist Party has been the pioneer of the anti-War movement in India. It stands unshaken by its policy. The party believes in unconditional resistance to War because:

- (a) acquiescence in India being dragged by the British Government into War is an abandonment of India's demand for complete national independence and is against Indian self-respect;
- (b) as Congressmen we abhor War and are committed to 'peaceful and legitimate means' and cannot accept arbitrament of arms as a solution of international problems; and
- (c) this is an imperialist War and not one for democracy.

30. M.N. Roy on India and War

Independent India, 17 September 1939

Dehra Dun
6 September 1939

I have been receiving urgent requests from Congress left-wingers to call immediately a Conference for discussing the situation created by the War in Europe and deciding what India should do in

this situation. I welcome the suggestion of a Conference of the leftists, and shall do whatever I can do in that connection. Meanwhile, Sjt Subhas Chandra Bose and Acharya Narendra Dev have been invited to attend the emergency meeting of the Working Committee evidently to express the Leftist point of view. I urge the Working Committee to be guided by the principle formulated in Pandit Jawaharlal's statement issued from Chunking. The principle is that, if we fight for democracy, we must have a democracy to fight for. In his broadcast, the Viceroy expressed the confidence that India would make her contribution on the side of human freedom. There can be no doubt about that; only, her own freedom must be the first concern of India. All freedom-loving people will congratulate the British Government on the decision, even though much belated, to put an end to Hitlerism, which it has been encouraging all the time. Had the decision been taken earlier, the freedom of many European countries would have been saved. On the contrary, British policy abetted the Fascist aggression on freedom and democracy. Therefore, British Imperialism cannot inspire confidence before the bona-fide of its belated anti-Fascism has been proved, conclusively. In any case, there being no danger of any attack on India, she has no reason to be actively concerned with the War in Europe. For the moment, her contribution to human freedom will be made by a determined effort to gain her own freedom. Any opposition to that effort will once again expose the hollowness of imperialist professions. A free India will actively join the fight for exterminating Fascism which is a scourge on modern civilisation. But let her free herself first. I hope all conference and consultations will be held for devising the ways and means to promote that purpose.

31. India and the War

This is a summary report of a meeting held at Malegaon Camp on 7 September 1939. Weekly Confidential Reports, Home Department, 1937 (6), part 1, 1939, Maharashtra State Archives.

7 September 1939

[Extracts]

Bhutekar as usual sang about Mother India describing her condition and said 'The world is passing through a very critical stage today. A great War has begun. The root of this War is in the last Great War of 1914. Germany was defeated in that War and a treaty was affected with very heavy conditions upon Germany. Since that time Germany began its preparations for this War. After making preparations she got back her territories that were divided at the time of the treaty without any bloodshed. Danzig¹ and the Corridor² could not be taken back without bloodshed and hence the War. Hitler is just like *Ravana* having ambitions to conquer the world. He is cruel like a demon. He formed friendship with Mussolini, another demon who conquered Abyssinia very cruelly. England and France joined this War in order to put a stop to this cruelty. This War is likely to assume a great general aspect and is likely to spread all over on account of the air force. You should also be on the alert as aeroplanes always pass via Malegaon. The British Government are ruling over us for the last 150 years but they did not teach us how to protect ourselves. And still they say now India would protect herself if they leave her. They say that they have joined the War for justice and peace. Why do they not apply these principles to India? People of India are starving. They are in slavery. We helped the British Government in the past great War and what was the fruit of it? We got the Rowlatt Act and the massacre of Jallianwalla Bagh at Amritsar. We are therefore doubtful about the conduct of the British Government. We are not enemies but we have our own suspicions about their conduct since their behaviour from the last great War. They should therefore give complete independence to India first and then the question of help will be considered.

They should bring into vogue the principle of equality and liberty in India before demanding help from her.

Our creed is non-violence and we shall fight with the Government according to this very principle. There is already famine in the country and prices of commodities are going up on account of war. Thus the people are doubly hard-pressed. The Working Committee of the Congress will shortly decide and direct people how to behave at such a time. The Government promised the Poles that they would help them if they were attacked by Germany and now they are keeping up their promise. What about the promises that were given to India? After the last Great War President Wilson declared 14 principles out of which the greatest was the principle of self-determination. It was made applicable to all other countries, but it was not applied to India. Why was it so?

At the time of the Tripuri Congress, Babu Subhas Chandra Bose was telling the Congress leaders that six months' ultimatum should be given to the Government but they did not listen to him owing to party factions and lack of statesmanship. Had that resolution been passed at Tripuri the Government would have been obliged to think twice before entering into this War. It would have been very difficult for them to join it. Let us now wait and see what lead the Working Committee is going to give to the nation. Subhas Babu says that we have a golden opportunity at present and we must take advantage of it; if we lose it we shall not get it and we shall have to undergo a very hard test before getting freedom.

I, therefore, request you all to unite leaving aside all caste distinctions. We should all remember that our forefathers died in India and that we shall all die in India. Do not miss this opportunity. There should be solid unity amongst all if we want to make our future bright. We should forget all caste and religious differences and be one and put unitedly our demand of complete swaraj....

¹ By the Treaty of Versailles in 1919 Danzig, a German town, but the natural port of Poland (which had been promised in Wilson's Fourteen Points, a free and secure access to the sea), became a Free City in Treaty relations with Poland, entering the Polish Customs area and entrusting the conduct of its foreign relations to Poland.

² By the Treaty of Versailles, Germany ceded to Poland the province of Posen and the greater part of the province of West Prussia with a sea board of some forty miles—the so-called 'corridor'—which divided East Prussia from the rest of Germany.

32. India and the War

Linlithgow to Roger Lumlay, 9 September 1939, Linlithgow Papers, Acc. No. 2339, NAI

9 September 1939

[Extracts]

... I think we have every reason to be satisfied with the general response of India to this emergency. I had the most friendly interview with Gandhi who made it perfectly clear to me where his sympathies lay and whose admirable statement issued after our talk will, I am quite certain, have had very considerable influence outside. I hope myself that he will be able to bring the Working Committee into line, though one cannot estimate how much importance should be attached to the influence on the other side of Subhas Bose. Nor can one guess what Jawaharlal's attitude is likely to be, though I should have thought that the Russian volte-face¹ might have made him reconsider certain of his earlier views on foreign policy.

Jinnah for your own information, I found a little more sticky, and rather more disposed to bargain; but his own position is, I am pretty sure, not too strong. It is obvious that the section of Muslim opinion represented by Sikander, and, to some extent, by Fazlul Huq, is increasingly

restive of control by the Muslim League under Jinnah's leadership, and he has been trying the patience of the supporters of the League in Northern India pretty high during these last few months. That of course is none of my business, and it is essential that the Governor-General should not give the slightest ground for any suspicion or suggestion that he is becoming entangled in the internal politics of the Muslim community. Equally, while the existence of this state of things makes the support or lack of it of Jinnah a matter of somewhat less consequence than would otherwise be the case.

¹ On 23 August, Germany entered into a non-aggression pact with Russia under secret supplementary conditions, fixing the relative spheres of interest of the two powers in Eastern Europe. The Pact was signed on 24 August at Moscow by Von Rebbentrop, German foreign minister and M. Molotov, the Russian foreign minister.

33. Congress Socialist Party and the War

Report of a public meeting of the Congress Socialist Party held at People's Park on 10.9.1939, GO No. 1960 dated 8.11.39. Tamil Nadu Archives, Public (General Dept.), 1939

10 September 1939

[Extracts]

B. Srinivasa Rao reiterated that the present government administration was a military administration. HE the Viceroy while inviting Mahatma Gandhi on one side for an interview had promulgated ordinances curtailing freedom of speech, writing etc. Even the so-called newspapers had now began praying for the maintenance and continuance of British imperialism. Many princes, maharajas, zamindars and landlords had offered their help with all their resources. They should understand that none of these people or their children would be sent to the front. It was only the band of hungry, starving and unemployed poor people in the country that would be asked to shed their blood to maintain their autocracy. He was sorry to note that Mahatma Gandhi, having had very bitter experiences of the promises and pledges of British statesmen, should sympathise with them and run to Shimla when asked by the Viceroy to meet him. From the attitude of the High Command of the Congress towards the extremists and Forward Bloc of the Congress it was clear that the High Command was not for any drastic programme of action against British imperialism. This attitude of the Congress leaders and the High Command was sure to bring ruin to this country. He for his part did not care whether imperialism or fascism died in the present war. He would wish that both should perish and be destroyed completely....

34. The Congress Working Committee and the War

Mahadev Desai to G.D. Birla, 10 September 1939

G.D. Birla, *Bapu: A Unique Association*, Vol. 3, 1977, pp. 338-39.

Segaon,
Via Wardha,

Private

September 10, 1939

My dear Ghanshyamdasji

I could not tell you much on that telephone in Jamnalalji's office surrounded by all kinds of people. Bapu suggested yesterday a practical proposition to the WC assuming that the members

are not pacifists nor the ministers. He said there should be no obstruction nor non-cooperation, and that ministers should carry on to the extent it was possible and offer cooperation in all respects in which they could do so conscientiously. The country, he explained, was not ready for any kind of resistance, that the repression would be of the fiercest type, that though, as Jayaprakash said, we may find a hundred Jayaprakashes ready to be shot down, that sacrifice was hardly worth making; that no foreigner would be better to deal with than the British, that imperialism would destroy itself in the war nor to rear its head again, and that all things considered the best policy would be to help and not to hinder. This he said in reply to Subhas and Jayaprakash. Subhas said he felt that the masses were ready everywhere for a non-violent resistance and Jayaprakash said that he would far rather die an inglorious death than offer any kind of help to the British. The battle is still raging, and I cannot quite predict the upshot. But of course it is going to lead to an open rupture with the Leftists. The W.C. too have not yet made up their minds. I myself do not quite see how the ministers can offer the discriminate cooperation that Bapu suggests. It would not be accepted I am afraid.

I mentioned to Vallabhbhai your suggestion about making Bapu the sole plenipotentiary. V. said there would be no difficulty but everything would depend on Jawahar who is expected here this afternoon. His friends here are not prepared to believe that Jawahar made any statement of the kind attributed to him! However, we shall see. Bapu is still imploring the W.C. to forget him and to do what it likes.

I left your bedding with Shri Mathuraprasad, Advocate, Chairman of the Municipality, Gaya, asking him to deliver it to you the next day, or to send it on to you by Ry. Parcel. I have given him your address. Did you get my letter from Gomoh Station?

Any chance of your coming this side?

Yours affectionately,
Mahadev

35. Testing Times

Editorial, *Leader*, 10 September 1939

10 September 1939

It may sincerely be hoped that the Working Committee of the Congress may arrive at a decision in relation to the war which may be consistent with the best interests of the country. Whether Mahatma Gandhi will be able to persuade the committee to adopt the same point of view to which he gave expression the other day with reference to England¹ remains to be seen. His influence and that of Vallabhbhai Patel is great, at least among the rightists, but one cannot forget that there will be some fire-eaters there. We should be more than surprised if Subhas Chandra Bose, after all that he has been saying in public since he broke loose from the orthodox section of the Congress, will now line up with Mahatma Gandhi. Jawaharlal Nehru, fresh from his visit to China,² and with all his obsessions and British imperialism and his love of a classless society, is an uncertain factor. Divided between personal loyalty to the Mahatma and loyalty to his own convictions he may once again show that when the supreme moment for decision arrives, he is unable to take a definite line. The socialists at Lucknow have met and their fulminations have already appeared in the columns of Lucknow contemporary.³ They profess to look upon this war not as a war in defence of democracy but as a war between two groups of capitalist powers, forgetting that Russia, the inspirer of their dreams, is now an ally of fascist Germany. They cannot be expected easily to change and they may be a source of dissension at the meeting of the committee. Nevertheless it may be hoped that for the time being wiser counsels may prevail and Mahatma Gandhi, never

lacking in formula, may once again put forward a formula which will preserve apparently the solidarity of the Congress. The solidarity of the Congress, however, is one thing and the safety of the country and its future interests are another thing. The socialists speak with cool confidence as if the whole country had accepted their creed and they were reflecting the opinion of the entire Indian community. Nothing, however, is further from truth than this wrong assumption. There is, we admit, a very wide and an almost universal feeling in the country that India must no longer occupy in the British Government at this juncture is going to lead to that freedom which they aspire after, or is going to prevent men from the Punjab and other provinces from rendering services. The British Socialists are made differently. They are standing shoulder to shoulder with the Conservatives and the Liberals, and our Indian socialists' attitude towards the war may well alienate them from India completely. We may be told that if there is danger to any country, it is to England. But suppose England is defeated, is it then really believed that the socialists, or, for the matter of that, the Congress will be able to establish an independent government in India, or that Germany or Russia or Japan will let them do so. Why should then the whole of the country, Hindus and Mahomedans, princes and peasants, be involved in black ruin by the brave words of our socialists or Nazis? There are testing times, when men must act up the faith that is in them, and not be misguided or misled by men to whom bluff and bluster are the very breath of their nostrils.

¹ See above, Linlithgow to Zetland, 5 September 1939, Item No. 27.

² Jawaharlal Nehru left India on 20 August for China and returned on 9 September, having cut short his visit due to the war.

³ See above, 'Congress Socialist Party and the War', 6 September 1939.

36. On Congress and War

'The Crucial Test', Editorial, *Independent India*, 10 September 1939

10 September 1939

The British Government has declared war. As part of the British Empire, India is involved by the declaration. War has been imposed on her. Imperialism has flouted the repeated resolution of the Congress 'to oppose all attempts to impose war on India'. The leadership of the Indian nationalist movement, represented by the Congress, is put to the crucial test. The country is anxiously awaiting a fateful decision on the part of the supreme executive of its premier political organization,—perhaps the most fateful ever made.

As soon as the perennial European crisis appeared to be nearing a new acuteness, it was suggested that an emergency meeting of the Congress Working Committee should immediately take place. The President actually issued the notice of the meeting. But a few days later, when the international situation did not show any sign of easing, the meeting was postponed. That was an intriguing step which kept the politically alert guessing about the possible result of the secret diplomacy carried on by the Congress leaders, at least by a few of them. Two events preceded the postponement of the emergency meeting of the Working Committee.

Even before it was called, the Congress Premiers from all the provinces met, according to a plan made previously, in a Conference at Poona under the Presidentship of the Chairman of the Parliamentary Sub-Committee.¹ The Premier's Conference was to discuss what the Congress Ministries should do in case of a war in Europe. It is reported that the question was discussed for four days. But the Conference ended without announcing any decision. The only decision, known to the public, was to temporize—the last thing to do in a critical moment. Nevertheless, that strange decision, not to decide anything, naturally stood in the way to any emergency meeting of

the Working Committee. It would be ridiculous to hold an emergency session which would make no decision. The argument for temporizing just when decisive action was needed was that the next move must come from the side of the Government. Unless there had been any secret move from the side of the Congress, the expected move of the Government was to be made in reply to the oft-repeated resolution of the Congress, reaffirmed by the Working Committee in its last meeting. Since the Poona Conference, the Government has made two moves, in quick succession. The later move—declaration of war by the British Government—is a check which threatens a mate, unless the opposing party has up its sleeves a sure plan to break through the attack. As far as we know, there is no such plan. So, the danger of our leadership giving up the game is imminent.

The earlier move of the Government, however, has been the more decisive. It seems that the policy of temporize was adopted in anticipation thereof. Expecting that move to be conciliatory, those who really determine and guide the Congress policy today did not want to prejudice the chances by any hasty declaration. That earlier, more decisive, move of the Government was to invite Gandhi together with his most trusted lieutenants to meet the Viceroy for discussing the Congress attitude in case of a war. The emergency meeting of the Working Committee was formally postponed on the arrival of the Viceregal invitation for Gandhi, although that decision had actually been made even earlier, in pursuance of the temporizing policy adopted at the Poona Conference. Imperialism is anxious to come to some understanding with the Congress. But it naturally wishes to bargain from a position of vantage. The declaration of war has upset all the opportunistic calculation of the Congress leaders, and on the other hand, has placed the Viceroy in a position wherein he must dictate terms. There will be no negotiations at Simla. The Viceroy in the situation created by the declaration of War, can tell Gandhi only one thing; take it or leave it; the War is there; either join hands or cross swords. Gandhi, being a man of peace, who wants peace at any price, will have no hesitation as regards the choice. The Congress stands on the eve of a capitulation!

This disturbing and shameful perspective is not altogether new. It was opened up by the behaviour of our leaders ever since the meeting of the AICC at Delhi in September last year. At that time also, Europe was trembling on the brink of a war on the Czechoslovakian issue. In that psychological moment, for the first time, the hint came from the Congress that it might accept office also in the Centre if imperialism would shelve the ill-conceived Federal Scheme. It was expected that, if the imminent war broke out, imperialism would be compelled to pay a good price for Congress cooperation without which its position in India was sure to be very precarious. With that expectation, the AICC was persuaded to arm the Working Committee with plenary powers which would enable it to close a bargain with imperialism in distress, and later on have it endorsed by the Congress. Emergency places disorganized democracy at a discount.

The AICC having passed the very significant resolution, and given it the power to make or mar the future of India, the Working Committee for a number of days remained in permanent session, holding up the olive branch and expecting the next move from the other side. That time, the expected move was not made. The war was avoided in Europe. For the time being, it was not necessary for imperialism to sue for the cooperation of the Congress.

Since then, there has been persistent rumour about backdoor diplomacy and underhand dealings. Meanwhile, the Congress repeated its resolution to oppose the imposition of war on India. But, on the other hand, the logical consequences of the ministerialist policy came to be evident at least for those who cared to see. The object of the policy was to extend the 'parallel Government' beyond the limits of the provinces to the Centre. As the President of the Congress, Subhas Chandra Bose, himself announced that the Congress was running a race towards Delhi and that it was sure of beating others in the game. The Chairman of the Parliamentary Sub-Committee, having busied himself with electoral arithmetics, came to the conclusion that the

Congress could capture a majority even in the Federation Legislature. But the subsequent failure in coming to some understanding either with the Muslim League or with the Princes, compelled the Congress leaders to look for a different way to the establishment of the 'Parallel Government' in the Centre. The Congress would stand a better chance of capturing a majority in the Central Legislature, if the Federal Scheme was shelved for the time being, and it is re-elected according to the old Constitution. Consequently, all efforts were bent for the introduction of interim responsibility in the Centre. Imperialism, on its side, appeared to favour the ideas which would offer it a graceful exit out of the impasse over the introduction of the Federal Scheme.² There being agreement on principle, what was needed was an opportunity to put it into practice. The War would afford the opportunity.

One would ask, how could this policy be reconciled with the oft-repeated resolution of the Congress to oppose the imposition of a war on India? It is not a very difficult question. The answer is contained in the famous phrase itself. The Congress is committed to oppose war if it is imposed on India. Otherwise, if imperialism acts in consultation with the representatives of the Indian people, there will be no cooperation. This is the clear implication of the central idea of the oft-repeated Congress resolution on war. But it is no longer necessary to interpret the text. Pursuing the policy, inaugurated by the Delhi AICC resolution, the Congress leaders reached a stage where the position has to be a little clarified to encourage the desired response from imperialism. The first step in that direction was taken at Tripuri. It is contained in the famous resolution on 'National Demand' which, curiously enough, has become the political mainstay of the otherwise unstable conglomeration sailing under the false colour of leftism. In the AICC meeting at Calcutta, still another step was taken in the direction of a possible understanding with imperialism in the case of war. Finally, the resolution of the last meeting of Working Committee³ makes the attitude of the Congress abundantly clear. The text of the oft-repeated resolution is repeated once again, 'to oppose all attempts to impose a war on India'. But the same resolution ends with a rider giving the authoritative interpretation of the text:

In the event of a war crisis leading to danger to any part of India from the air or otherwise it may be necessary for protective measures to be taken. The Committee will be prepared to encourage such measures if they are within the control of popular Ministries.

That is clear enough. Only, the willingness to cooperate with imperialism in the case of a war is justified on an imaginary pretext. In case of a conflict, either in Europe or in the Far East, no part of India could ever be really in danger of an attack from the air or otherwise. That is an imperialist scare which should not perturb any intelligent Indian. In any case, should the present conflict in Europe develop into large scale armed hostilities, any danger to India is altogether out of the question. It is simply fantastic to imagine German aeroplanes coming all the way to bombard India. No serious attack from Japan is militarily conceivable. Italy may stay out of the conflict. So, there is no necessity for taking any serious measure for the defence of India herself. She will participate in the war as a part of the British Empire—as a source of supply. Yet, by the resolution of Working Committee the Congress is committed to encourage measures to be taken by imperialism with the object of scaring India under its protecting wing. Having deliberately placed themselves in this position, the Congress leaders must go ahead with eyes open to cooperate with imperialism, on its terms....

¹ The appointment of a Parliamentary Sub-Committee was confirmed in the Bombay session of the CWC on 21–27 June. Patel was Chairman of the sub-committee. Rajendra Prasad and Maulana Azad were its other two members.

¹ The Viceroy addressing a joint session of the two houses of the Central Legislature on 11 September, also announced that preparations in connection with the introduction of Federation would remain in suspense during the pendency of the war.

² Congress Working Committee, 9–12 August 1939.

37. India and the War

Editorial, *Bombay Chronicle*, 12 September 1939

12 September 1939

The Congress Working Committee has anxiously considered for many long hours the question of India's attitude towards the war but does not seem to have yet come to any definite decision. It is obvious that conflicting views have been placed before the Committee by representatives of different schools of thought, and the Committee is making strenuous efforts to reconcile all these views as far as possible. Though apparently conflicting, the more representative views do not seem to be irreconcilable. For if they were so, there would probably have been an early majority decision. The delay in arriving at any definite decision suggests that it seems possible, however difficult, to devise a formula acceptable to all parties in the Congress. The idea uppermost in the minds of Congressmen has been expressed by leaders like Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Maulana Abul Kalam Azad. It is to put an end to the petty internal conflicts of all kinds and face the emergency with dignity and unity.

Meanwhile, the executive committee of several political bodies other than the Congress have met in Bombay and have arrived at more or less similar conclusions. The Working Committee of the National Liberal Federation thinks that in this crisis India should 'unhesitatingly and unconditionally support the democratic Powers by every possible means so that they may come out victorious in the struggle' and that 'this is not the time for bargaining'. The Committee accordingly urges all other political parties to range themselves definitely on the side of Britain. At the same time the Committee appeals to His Majesty's Government and the Government of India 'to create such Psychological conditions in the country as will lead to a general political appeasement and ensure complete co-operation on the part of the people of India by cementing friendly relations.' In particular, the Committee appeals to Government 'to hasten the replacement of the present form of Central Government by a Government responsible to the public, and also to 'remove all causes of distrust that the present military policy arouses and to create a modern and efficient Indian Defence Force so as to enable India effectively to defend herself against foreign aggression.'¹ A somewhat similar resolution has been adopted by the Democratic Swaraj party,² which states that the question of India's freedom would have to be settled in order to stimulate the maximum effort on the part of India in the prosecution of the war and that the most effective way of securing India's co-operation in the war would be for Government to prepare the people of India for the country's defence by throwing open to all Indians recruitment to the Indian army, irrespective of any considerations of caste, creed, race or province. The Hindu Mahasabha views the position mainly from the communal standpoint and demands, among other things, the redress of the 'grievous wrongs done to the Hindus by the Communal Decisions' and 'calls upon the Hindus throughout India to organise Hindu National Militia.'³

If these bodies expected the Viceroy to make any reference to their constitutional and other demands in his address to the Central Legislature, they must have been completely undeceived by now. He dwelt solely on the question of war and what he considered to be India's unquestionable duty to support Britain. All other matters, he quietly dismissed on the plea that 'questions directly associated with that emergency must be of predominant and, in a sense, of almost exclusive

importance.' But Indians rightly believe that there are several questions which vitally affect them and the war, too, and which, therefore, cannot be ignored. After all, as even the *Manchester Guardian* admits, India is involved in the war only because of her connection with Britain, and her own 'grievances persist' despite her deep sympathy for the democracies. The paper, therefore, urges: 'Not only because of possible Congress objections but because of our own welfare India deserves to be treated as a full equal.' If the war is for the purpose of freeing democracies from foreign domination and the ravages of Nazism, does it not follow that that India, who is called upon to make all kinds of sacrifices for the war, should herself be made a democracy free from foreign domination? The Viceroy has announced¹ that there is 'no choice but to hold in suspense work in connection with preparations for Federation while retaining Federation as our objective.' It is, of course, a great triumph for Indian public opinion that it has secured the burial of the federal scheme embodied in the Government of India Act of 1935. But India cannot be content with a negative triumph. Apart from India's own inalienable right, the declared aim of Britain in prosecuting the war calls for urgent satisfaction of this country's demand for effective control at the Centre. Bargaining at this time will certainly be bad but a one-sided bargain at India's expense is infinitely worse.

¹ 'The Working Committee of the National Liberal Federation of India views with serious apprehension the international situation which has necessitated a declaration of war on the part of Britain and France to meet Nazi aggression against Poland. The Liberal party has always stood for democracy and freedom and has repeatedly expressed its opposition to the Nazi and Fascist policies and methods of settling differences between nations by force instead of by peaceful negotiation. Such methods and policies are entirely repugnant to Liberal principles. The Committee deems it its duty to express its considered view that in this crisis, India should unhesitatingly and unconditionally support the democratic powers by every possible means so that they may come out victorious in the struggle. This is not the time for bargaining, though India's grievances are grave and many.'

² The resolution stated the task of defending India from any military attack is of common concern to the British Government as well as the Indians themselves; and as the latter were not in a position to carry out that responsibility unaided, there is ample room for cooperation between India and England. To make such cooperation effective the Mahasabha urged the introduction of responsible Government at the center, the revision of the communal award, the modification of the Arms Act to bring it on par with that prevailing in England and the expansion of the Indian territorial force. *Leader*, 13 September 1939.

³ The Central Executive of the Democratic Swaraj Party met at Bombay on 11 September and was presided over by Jamnadas Mehta.

⁴ See above, On Congress and War, 10 September 1939, Item No. 36 in this chapter.

38. Congress Socialist Party and the War

Under the auspices of the Madras Press Labour Union, a public meeting was held in Madras on 12 September 1939 at the Loans Square, Madras, with K.V. Varadarajulu, a press worker, in the chair. About 200 workers attended. The red flag was hoisted at the meeting place. Tamil Nadu Archives, Public (General Dept.), 1939

12 September 1939

[Extracts]

P. Jeevanantham, General Secretary of the Tamil Nadu Socialist Party, said that British imperialism was under the impression that Herr Hitler would fight against Russia and crush it. Instead of doing so, Germany had entered into a Non-Aggression Pact with Russia. If Nazi Germany were to conquer Poland, it would demand her colonies in Africa. Hence British imperialism had declared war against Germany. In the last War of 1914, it was clearly known as to who all were to fight against Germany. In the present War, America, Japan and Italy were neutral. It was not

known as to who would join with Britain. The people would suffer much exploitation during war. It was the duty of the workers to remove imperialism from the land. Hence he said that they should avail themselves of this war opportunity to achieve Independent India. All the workers, he said, should join as members of the Labour Union immediately, availing themselves of this opportunity with a view to avert the crisis in the country. At the same time, he requested the workers to enroll themselves till 15 September 1939 as members of the Congress, which was an anti imperialistic organisation. It was their duty not to lose this opportunity. It was indispensable for them to establish a socialistic order of society in the country. They should realise that their goal was to end imperialism in the land and for that purpose they should carry on a revolutionary struggle at this junction. It was quite necessary, he said, that the rule of the country should be in the hands of the labourers....

K.V. Varadarajulu referred to the notice of retrenchment served on the workers of the 'Associated Printers' and said that the capitalists joined with the Government to crush the workers. The workers, he said, should be prepared at any time to fight against, not only capitalists but also British imperialism. They, he said, should always entertain the idea to bury imperialism. There was poverty in the land and the workers were put to much hardship. While it was so, the capitalists were making retrenchment and were thus sending out the workers. He appealed to them to be united and observed that if they were all united they would be able to drive out British imperialism from the land within 24 hours. The capitalists were helping imperialism to remain in the country. Referring to the war, he said, that false propaganda was being done that the War was being waged for human freedom. They should not believe it. The War, it is said, was being waged to protect the freedom of Poland. The speaker said it was an utter falsehood. The capitalists were doing propaganda that they would give money for the War. Every worker and every layman should pledge themselves that they would fight against British imperialism. They, he said, should avail themselves of this war opportunity to achieve Swaraj. If they were to let slip this opportunity, they would remain as slaves perpetually. Had they agitated in 1914, they would have got independence. He appealed to them for unity.

A.S.K. Ayyangar spoke and said that the Congress Working Committee was considering whether to help Britain or not. Some leaders had given out their opinion that it was impossible to launch satyagraha with the help of the peasants and workers without resorting to violence and that therefore they should not launch satyagraha. Some leaders had given out that they could support Britain on condition if Britain yielded to some of their demands. Subhas Chandra Bose and his associates—the extremists and the communists said that they should not take part in the present war.... If they were asked to help Britain in the War, he said, they should give a reply that their hands and feet were bound in chains of slavery and that they were unable to move an inch. In these circumstances he asked how could they help in the War. During the last War of 1914 India helped in the War and in return they got the Jallianwala Bagh. They, he said, should not be deceived now. A tiger was caught in the mire. It promised the passers-by that it would present them with a gold bangle if they could take it out from the mire. A Brahmin, for the sake of the gold bangle rescued it from the mire and the tiger devoured the Brahmin. If they were to help Britain, he said, that it would do complete harm to them. The Viceroy in his speech had said that Federation would be stopped till the close of the War. The Congress leaders were feeling joy over that statement. It was said, that Britain would carry on the War for a period of 3 years. But, he said, it could not be dragged on, since it was a chemical warfare and since civil population was being bombed....

He asked them not to believe in the propaganda that Hindus and Muslims were not united. The Muslim could never forget the harm done to them in Palestine. They should all be united at this juncture. He asked them to do propaganda that they could end British imperialism and that

they should not under any circumstances take part in the War. They should tell the people about the atrocities done by the Government in Palestine and North West Frontier and that they should fight against the British Government.

39. Congress and War

Editorial, *Tribune*, 14 September 1939

14 September 1939

By the time that this issue is in the hands of the reader he will probably have before him the decision of the Congress Working Committee regarding the attitude, which the Congress should take up with regard to the war, but at the time of writing no question is being more anxiously or more energetically canvassed by all sections of political opinion in India than question as to what this attitude is going to be. As we have said already, logically there are three and only three possible courses open to the Congress. It may be actively against the war. Secondly, it may be in sympathy with Poland and with Britain and France in the war that has been forced upon them, but may nevertheless be opposed to India's active participation in it, either because India is not yet a free country herself for because victory in the war is likely to strengthen British Imperialism, to which the Congress is strongly and irreconcilably opposed. Or lastly, it may be in favour of India's active participation in the war, subject only to conditions, which are implicit in the very idea of active participation. There are other conceivable courses open to the Congress, but logically they fail under one or other of these categories. Which of these courses is the Congress likely to take?

The first course is outside the range of practical politics. It is ruled out by the Congress's own past commitments as well as by the public declarations made on its behalf by Congress leaders representing all shades of views. There are no two leaders who have raised their voices oftener or more loudly against India's participation in Britain's imperialistic wars than Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose, and both of them have repeatedly condemned what they have justly described as the betrayal of the cause of democracy and freedom by Britain and France in Ethiopia, in Spain and in Czechoslovakia. The Congress itself has followed their lead in this matter and has strongly and unequivocally condemned the failure of Britain and France to resist Fascist or Nazi aggression in the past. With what consistency or propriety can the Congress now declare itself against the action of Poland in defending herself against Nazi aggression and of Britain and France in coming to her help? What value would world opinion attach to the views of the Congress as a serious political organisation if after having denounced England and France for betraying the cause of democracy and freedom in other cases, it either denounced them now for trying to uphold it, or failed to sympathise with them in their attempt to do so?

The choice of the Working Committee, therefore, must lie clearly between the second and the third course. It is a matter of common knowledge that some leading Congressmen, including Subhas Chandra Bose and his associates and lieutenants, are in favour of the second course, though they give an additional reason for it. In their opinion the present is a unique opportunity for India to press her national demand. The view is not without plausibility, but only a little reflection suffices to show that it has fatal draw-backs; and if it is true, as a Wardha telegram states, that Bose has failed to persuade the Working Committee to see eye to eye with him we have no doubt that it is mainly on account of its consciousness of those drawbacks. In the first place, it is difficult to see what India's sympathy with Poland and with the cause of democracy and freedom is worth if it is not to find any tangible expression even within the limits of the opportunities open to her. The fact that she is not a free country may prevent India from doing all that she could have

done in a free state; it is no reason whatsoever for her not doing what she can do even in the existing conditions in a cause which she considers just and with which she is in sympathy. Secondly, there is no conceivable manner in which victory in this war can strengthen British Imperialism. However the war may end, there is not the least likelihood that any one can see of Britain being able, as a result of it, to add to her possessions even if she is anxious to do so. Nor is there any chance of her being able to improve her position vis-a-vis either the self-governing Dominions or those parts of the Commonwealth that are yet, to become self-governing. So far as India herself is concerned, it is unthinkable that as the result of her participation in the war her position vis-a-vis Britain will become worse than it is even if it does not get better, as in all human probability it will. Thirdly and lastly, there is no difference, in actual practice, between India's participation in the war contingent on the satisfaction of her national demands and the idea of giving an ultimatum to the British Government, which the Congress has already considered and rejected. A resolution by the Working Committee refusing to participate in the war would cause an immediate constitutional deadlock in eight out of the eleven provinces of India, leading inevitably to a suspension of the constitution and the creation of an atmosphere in which the Congress would have no choice except to resort to some form of direct action. This is exactly what would have happened if the ultimatum idea had been accepted by the Congress. The Congress deliberately refused to accept that idea, because in its opinion the conditions in the country were not conducive to the success of a campaign of direct action. For that very reason it has to reject the present proposal.

The third course is thus the only one that is left, and we have no doubt in our mind that it will be adopted by the Working Committee in one form or another. Mahatma Gandhi, from whom the Working Committee draws its inspiration in all major matters and who is actively helping it in this case, has already led the way. He has stated clearly and unequivocally that his sympathies are with Britain and France, and that while he has no doubt in his mind that India's deliverance will come soon he is not thinking of it immediately, because the freedom of India is a part of the world's freedom, which is at stake in this war. This, as we know, is also the view of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru who has definitely declared that India should throw herself whole-heartedly into the struggle for a creation of a new order in the world. So far from believing that British Imperialism will receive an impetus as a result of the war, Pandit Jawaharlal thinks that it will receive its death-knell from it. That is a view, which we ourselves share fully. As a result of the last world war British Imperialism definitely disappeared from the self-governing Dominions, which virtually became independent States. As a result of the present war, if we know how to play our cards well and successfully, India is bound to be added to the list, and with India becoming a free country British Imperialism will virtually disappear from the world, for, after all, as Lord Morley once said, 'India is Britain's only Empire. But this result will not be achieved by India following a policy of sullen aloofness. It can only be achieved by her co-operating actively in bringing about the new order without in any way abandoning or even abating by a jot or tittle the struggle for her won freedom. The Working Committee should tell the British Government that while the Congress will naturally place an obstacle in the way of the prosecution of a war with which it is in full sympathy, and while the Congress Governments are prepared to carry out such official functions as they may be called upon to perform in the prosecution of the war, as long as they can do so consistently with the principles for which the Congress stands. India can take her full part in the war as a nation only if she is treated as a free agent. This, as we have said already, is implicit in the very idea of active cooperation. From this point of view the suspension of the present federal scheme is the wisest thing, which the Government could have done. Persistence in the policy of imposing that scheme on India would have made it impossible for the Congress to offer any cooperation to the Government, because it was pledged as solemnly to resist that scheme with all the resources at its

disposal as Britain and France were pledged to resist German aggression. It is perhaps for this reason that Mahatmaji, if reports are to be believed, strongly urged the Viceroy in the course of his recent talk with His Excellency to lay the scheme aside at least for the time being. But necessary as a first step, it should not clearly be the last. It should be the starting point of a new policy of appeasement of India. As regards the war itself the Government of India must plainly see that if they want India's official help to be transformed into a national endeavour they must at least for the limited purpose of prosecuting the war treat India on a footing of equality with the Dominions.

40. The Congress and the War: Working Committee's Manifesto

CWMG, Vol. 70, pp. 409–13

1. The Working Committee have given their earnest consideration to the grave crisis that has developed owing to the declaration of war in Europe.¹ The principles which should guide the nation in the event of war have been repeatedly laid down by the Congress, and only a month ago this Committee reiterated them and expressed their displeasure at the flouting of Indian opinion by the British Government in India. As a first step to dissociate themselves from this policy of the British Government, the Committee called upon the Congress members of the Central Legislative Assembly to refrain from attending the next session. Since then the British Government have declared India as a belligerent country, promulgated ordinances, passed the Government of India Act Amending Bill, and taken other far-reaching measures which affect the Indian people vitally, and circumscribe and limit the powers and the activities of the Provincial Governments.⁴ This has been done without the consent of the Indian People whose declared wishes in such matters have been deliberately ignored by the British Government. The Working Committee must take the gravest view of these developments.

2. The Congress has repeatedly declared its entire disapproval of the ideology and practice of Fascism and Nazism and their glorification of war and violence and the suppression of the human spirit. It has condemned the aggression in which they have repeatedly indulged and their sweeping away of well-established principles and recognised standards of civilized behaviour. It has seen in Fascism and Nazism the intensification of the principle of imperialism against which the Indian people have struggled for many years. The Working Committee must therefore unhesitatingly condemn the latest aggression of the Nazi Government in Germany against Poland and sympathize with those who resist it.

3. The Congress has further laid down that the issue of war and peace for India must be decided by the Indian people, and no outside authority can impose this decision upon them, nor can the Indian people permit their resources to be exploited for imperialist ends. Any imposed decision, or attempt to use Indian resources, for purposes not approved by them, will necessarily have to be opposed by them. If cooperation is desired in a worthy cause, this cannot be obtained by compulsion and imposition and the Committee cannot agree to the carrying out by the Indian people of orders issued by 'external authority'. Cooperation must be between equals by mutual consent for a cause which both consider to be worthy. The people of India have in the recent past, faced great risks and willingly made great sacrifices to secure their own freedom and establish a free democratic State in India, and their sympathy is entirely on the side of democracy and freedom. But India cannot associate herself in a war said to be for democratic freedom when that very freedom is denied to her, and such limited freedom, as she possesses taken away from her.

4. The Committee are aware that the Government of Great Britain and France have declared that they are fighting for democracy and freedom and to put an end to aggression. But the history of the recent past is full of examples showing the constant divergence between the spoken words,

the ideals proclaimed and the real motives and objectives. During the war of 1914–18, the declared war aims were the preservation of democracy, self-determination and the freedom of small nations, and yet the very Governments which solemnly proclaimed these aims entered into secret treaties embodying imperialist designs for the carving up of the Ottoman Empire. While stating that they did not want any acquisition of territory, the victorious Powers added largely to their colonial domains. The present European war itself signifies the abject failure of the Treaty of Versailles and of its makers, who broke their pledged word and imposed an imperialist peace on the defeated nations. The one hopeful outcome of that Treaty, the League of Nations, was muzzled and strangled at the outset and later killed by its parent States.

5. Subsequently history has demonstrated afresh how even a seemingly fervent declaration of faith may be followed by an ignoble desertion. In Manchuria the British Government connived at aggression; in Abyssinia they acquiesced in it. In Czechoslovakia and Spain democracy was in peril and it was deliberately betrayed, and the whole system of collective security was sabotaged by the very powers who had previously declared their firm faith in it.

6. Again it is asserted that democracy is in danger and must be defended, and with this statement the Committee are in entire agreement. The Committee believes that the peoples of the West are moved by this ideal and objective and for these they are prepared to make sacrifices. But again and again the ideals and sentiments of the people and of those who have sacrificed themselves in the struggle have been ignored and faith has not been kept with them.

7. If the war is to defend the status quo—imperialist processions, colonies, vested interests and privileges—then India can have nothing to do with it. If, however, the issue is democracy and a world order based on democracy, then India is intensely interested in it. The Committee are convinced that the interests of Indian democracy do not conflict with the interests of British democracy or of world democracy. But there is an inherent and ineradicable conflict between democracy for India or elsewhere and imperialism and Fascism. If Great Britain fights for the maintenance and extension of democracy, then she must necessarily end imperialism in her own possessions, establish full democracy in India, and the Indian people must have the right for self-determination by framing their own constitution through a Constituent Assembly without external interference, and must guide their own policy. A free, democratic India will gladly associate herself with other free nations for mutual defence against aggression and for economic cooperation. She will work for the establishment of a real world order based on freedom and democracy, utilizing the world's knowledge and resources for the progress and advancement of humanity.

8. The crisis that has overtaken Europe is not of Europe only but of humanity and will not pass like other crises or wars leaving the essential structure of the present-day world intact. It is likely to refashion the world for good or ill, politically, socially and economically. This crisis is the inevitable consequence of the social and political conflicts and contradictions which have grown alarmingly since the last great war, and it will not be finally resolved till these conflicts and contradictions are removed and a new equilibrium established. That equilibrium can only be based on the ending of the domination and exploitation of one country by another, and on a reorganization of economic relations on a juster basis for the common good of all. India is the crux of the problem, for India has been the outstanding example of modern imperialism, and no refashioning of the world can succeed which ignores this vital problem. With her vast resources she must play an important part in any scheme of world reorganization. But she can only do so as a free nation whose energies have been released to work for this great end. Freedom today is indivisible and every attempt to retain imperialist domination in any part of the world will lead inevitably to fresh disaster.

9. The Working Committee have noted that many Rulers of Indian States have offered their services and resources and expressed their desire to support the cause of democracy in Europe. If

they must make their professions in favour of democracy abroad, the Committee would suggest that their first concern should be the introduction of democracy within their own States in which today undiluted autocracy reigns supreme. The British Government in India is more responsible for this autocracy than even the Rulers themselves, as has been made painfully evident during the past year. This policy is the very negation of democracy and of the new world order from which Great Britain claims to be fighting in Europe.

10. As the Working Committee view past events in Europe, Africa and Asia, the more particularly past and present occurrences in India, they fail to find any attempt to advance the cause of democracy or self-determination, or any evidence that the present war declarations of the British Government are being, or are going to be, acted upon. The true measure of democracy is the ending of imperialism and Fascism alike and the aggression that has accompanied them in the past and the present. Only on that basis can a new order be built up. In the struggle for that new world order, the Committee are eager and desirous to help in every way. But the Committee cannot associate themselves or offer any cooperation in a war which is conducted on imperialist lines and which is meant to consolidate imperialism in India and elsewhere.

11. In view, however, of the gravity of the occasion and the fact that the pace of events during the last few days has often been swifter than the working of men's minds, the Committee desire to take not final decision at this stage,¹ so as to allow for the full elucidation of the issues at stake, the real objectives aimed at, and the position of India in the present and in the future. But the decision cannot long be delayed as India is being committed from day to day to a policy to which she is not a party and of which she disapproves.

12. The Working Committee therefore invites the British Government to declare in unequivocal terms what their war aims are in regard to democracy and imperialism and the new order that is envisaged, in particular, how these aims are going to apply to India and to be given effect to in the present. Do they include the elimination of imperialism and the treatment of India as a free nation whose policy will be guided in accordance with the wishes of her people? A clear declaration about the future, pledging the Government to the ending of imperialism and Fascism alike,¹ will be welcomed by the people of all countries, but it is far more important to give immediate effect to it, to the largest possible extent, for only this will convince the people that the declaration is meant to be honoured. The real test of any declaration is its application in the present, for it is the present that will govern action today and give shape to the future.

13. War has broken out in Europe and the prospect is terrible to contemplate. But war has been taking its heavy toll of human life during the past year in Abyssinia, Spain and China. Innumerable innocent men, women and children have been bombed to death from the air in open cities, cold-blooded massacres, torture and utmost humiliation have followed each other in quick succession during these years of horror. That horror grows, and violence and the threat of violence shadow the world, and, unless checked and ended, will destroy the precious inheritance of past ages. That horror has to be checked in Europe and China, but it will not end till its root causes of Fascism and imperialism are removed. To that end, the Working Committee are prepared to give their cooperation. But it will be infinite tragedy if even this terrible war is carried on in the spirit of imperialism and for the purpose of retaining this structure which is itself the cause of war and human degradation.

14. The Working Committee wish to declare that the Indian people have no quarrel with the German people or the Japanese people or any other people. But they have a deep-rooted quarrel with systems, which deny freedom and are based on violence and aggression. They do not look forward to a victory of one people over another or to a dictated peace, but to a victory of real

democracy for all the people of all countries and a world freed from the nightmare of violence administration imperialist oppression.

15. The Committee earnestly appeal to the Indian people to end all internal conflict and controversy and, in this grave hour of peril, to keep in readiness and hold together as a united nation, claim of purpose and determined to achieve the freedom of India within the larger freedom of the world.

¹ On 4 July, Rajendra Prasad had suggested a meeting of the Congress Working Committee to discuss the situation arising out of the possibility of war. Jawaharlal Nehru agreed and suggested that Bose, Acharya Narendra Dev and Jayaprakash be invited along with some prominent Muslims in the Congress. He further proposed: 'Even before the Working Committee meeting the imminence of the crisis would require a public statement from you in which you would state the Congress position of non-participation afresh and call upon the Congress Ministries and Congressmen generally to give effect to it. I think in this statement you might also say something to the effect that you would welcome the cooperation of the Muslim League in this joint endeavour. I would suggest your writing to Jinnah and telling him that in view of the grave crisis which threatens the country you would welcome his and the Muslim League's cooperation in the evaluation of a common programme of non-participation in the war. I do not think any reference need be made in that letter to the Hindu-Muslim problem as such.' Jawaharlal Nehru to Rajendra Prasad, 7 July 1939, *SWJN*, vol. 9, p. 306.

² Provincial Congress Committees, in general endorsed the Working Committee statement, for example, the Punjab and Kerala Congress Committees. They also condemned the provisions of the India Panel Code, 1860, which were enforced to curb the press, Section 153A used to carry out stringent action against nationalist workers, and the Defence of India Ordinance which empowered the Central Government to make such rules which were necessary to secure the defence of British India, maintain public order, supplies and service which were essential for the prosecution of the war. See File No. P-12, 1939-40, AICC Papers, and File No. 2-P, 1939, Rajendra Prasad Papers, NMML.

³ The *Hindu* and *Mail* welcomed the resolve of the Congress Working Committee to explore all possible means for a settlement, and not to launch civil disobedience hastily. The *Hindu* observed: 'Gandhiji is perfectly right in thinking that the necessary atmosphere for the successful prosecution of such a struggle is lacking'. Both the *Hindu* and the *Mail* in varying degrees, doubted the practicability of the demand for a Constituent Assembly on the bases of adult franchise in a country of India's dimensions but held that so long as the door to further negotiations is not closed, there is reason to hope that a solution of outstanding problems may be found.

⁴ Certain Congress papers in Malabar headed by the *Mathrubhumi* continued to complain that Britain's reluctance to give India what she wants shows that imperialism is not dead. The *Oolien*, a Tamil weekly published in the Ramnad District, while condemning 'Hitlerism' as a reign of terror, observed that so long as the aim of the war has not been designed by Britain and so long as silence on this is maintained, it will be presumed that the war was begun to destroy 'Hitlerism' because it was a menace to British imperialism.

41. On the CWC Resolution

G.D. Birla to Mahadev Desai, 15 September 1939. G.D. Birla, *Bapu: A Unique Association*, Vol. 3, 1977, p. 338

Calcutta,
15 September 1939

My Dear Mahadevbhai,

I am rather disappointed about the statement issued by the Working Committee. There are so many repetitions that it reads a rambling document. What is said in it could have been said in a shorter document. It is clear that Bapu had very little to do with it. The language sounds more like that of Jawaharlal. But is that all? Or any further step is going to be taken? I don't think the British Government will reply to this statement. But if any assurance is needed, Bapu will again see the Viceroy and the Working Committee will not talk through statements. Personal touch is necessary for both sides. And after the Viceroy has announced the burial of Federation, which again is due to an agreement between the Viceroy and Bapu, I should think that the next step would be comparatively easier. Bapu alone can handle the situation.

I tried my best to get you on phone almost every day during the last four days without any result. What is happening of the telephone that has been put at Maganwadi?

Yours sincerely,
Ghanshyamdas

42. On the CWC Meeting

Mahadev Desai to G.D. Birla, 15 September 1939. G.D. Birla, *Bapu: A Unique Association*, Vol. 3, 1977, pp. 341-42

Segaon,
Via Wardha,
September 15, 1939

My Dear Ghanshyamdasji,

Two days I came in response to your telephone call, but the call had been cancelled. It is no use depending on someone here to send me car in time, for by the time I got here the call is cancelled. You should have alternatively asked for Vallabhbhai.

You now know what has happened. It was inevitable. Bapu's proposition did not find favour with the WC. Vallabhbhai and others did not, I fear, have the courage to go to the country with Bapu's proposition. Then Bapu said they should listen to Jawahar's proposition. He came in with a statement covering fourteen sheets which he placed for the acceptance of the WC. The WC debated upon it for three days and, with a few modifications, adopted the statement. Maulana and Vallabhbhai pressed Bapu hard to retain the same position as he had occupied up to now. In other words they said the negotiations, if any, should be initiated with Bapu, or rather Bapu should be the sole authority to conduct the negotiations. Bapu said he could not agree to do this, because with the background of the statement he could not go to government to negotiate any terms. His way of negotiation was different from Jawahar's and it was for him to shoulder the whole burden. He also has a fundamental difference regarding what was to be done in the event of absence of response from government. In spite of this Maulana and Vallabhbhai and others continued to press Bapu. Then Bapu said to Jawahar: Give me your detached view. He had no hesitation in declaring that Bapu was always a bad negotiator, that his opponents always took an undue advantage of his generosity, and he would not trust him to negotiate with the Government. Bapu said that was quite right, though he was sure that his generosity had never done any harm to the nation. But Bapu was adamant that Jawahar whose resolution the WC willy nilly had adopted should be asked to assume command and to shoulder the burden both of negotiation, if any should take place, or of a fight if any should have to be offered. How the fight is to take place no one knows and Jawahar himself has no clear notion about it. But we have taken a decision of a most momentous character—more momentous than the decision taken at Lahore in 1929. For in 1930 the burden of carrying on satyagraha fell on Bapu, now the burden on Jawahar and Bapu does not know how to help in case the country should decide to fight—for he is convinced that there is no atmosphere for a fight. It is a dreadful situation but there was no other alternative. For the WC had not the gumption to take the line suggested by Bapu, and Jawahar had the courage of his conviction. The future is dark and gloomy and we may have to wander in wilderness now for three or more years. But we deserve it. We have neither assimilated Bapu's non-violence nor have we evolved our own policy.

This is a most superficial account of all that has happened. To give a full and accurate account I should have to fill a book. The days have been full of trial and travail for Bapu. But he could not think of a better course than advising the WC to entrust the reigns to Jawahar.

What Government's reaction will be, I do not dare to predict. Perhaps there may be no response, or an unsatisfactory response (which is most likely). Then we have to decide what to do. Let us hope and pray that even at that grim hour Bapu's advice may prevail.

Yours affectionately,
Mahadev

43. Reactions to the CWC's Statement

Viceroy to Secretary of State (Tel.), 16 September 1939, Linlithgow Papers, Acc. No. 2335, NAI

16 September 1939

[Extracts]

First reactions of Kher and Munshi to Working Committee's statement were to admit that they have been taken aback. They hope that it represents a preliminary manoeuvre with the object of bringing the bulk of Congress round to full cooperation, if we will make a gesture, and in support of this they claim that it is considerable advance on the War resolution of last month and that it denotes a wish to cooperation and is not a decision for non-cooperation.

44. India's Attitude Towards War: Socialists Commend Wardha Resolution

The CSP organised a public meeting at Chowpatty, Bombay, presided over by M.R. Masani. Several prominent members of CSP addressed the meeting. *Bombay Chronicle*, 16 September 1939

16 September 1939

Mr M.R. Masani¹ said that three months back he had resigned the Secretaryship of the Congress Socialist Party, but in such an emergency as faced the country today everybody should be at his post of duty and he was proud to stand again on the platform of the Congress Socialist Party. Speaking about India's attitude in the European War he said that there were two factors on which India's attitude should be determined: Firstly as Congressmen committed to peaceful and legitimate means they abhorred war and could not look upon it as a resolution of international problems; and secondly war could not possibly lead to a world order based on peace and Democracy.

Mr Masani said he hoped that by the time the All India Congress Committee met, it would be realised that there was only one policy open to the Congress—to implement its categorical declarations and resolutions.

Mr Jayprakash Narayan expressed doubt as to the prolongation of the war over a period of years and what advantages would accrue to India by participating in it. The Working Committee of the Congress had deferred decision on the subject, but it was necessary for everyone to be ready at his post to face the inevitable situation. The recent Ordinances and Viceregal promulgations showed that even the little hard-earned civil liberties and political privileges of the nation had been taken away under the Defence of India Act.

Mr Achyut Patwardhan said that though the last war was said to have been fought for establishing world-peace, actually Britain had expanded the boundaries of her Empire by the addition of Palestine, Tanganyika, South West Africa etc. Czechoslovakia, Manchuria, Austria, Albania and Abyssinia threw lurid light on Britain's attitude towards Democracy and weaker nations.

Dr Ram Manohar Lohia said when the League of Nations recommended sanctions against Italy in the Abyssinian war Britain showed her tardiness. India's attitude in the present war would depend on Britain's answer to the Congress question as to whether she was prepared to shed her Imperialism.

Acharya Narendra Dev said that India had no quarrel with any peoples. Her quarrel was only with the systems of Capitalist Imperialism. She was interested in her own freedom and that of other peoples. But she had to see how far the present war furthered that objective.

The war did not hold out bright hopes to her or to the other peoples who were under the heel of Imperialism. India had no direct interest in the present war; Great Powers like Russia and America could afford to be neutral for they were free; even smaller European countries could do the same, since they were free. But what about India? Without consulting the wishes of her people she was being dragged into the war. This was possible because she was still not a free country.

In conclusion Acharya Dev appealed to the people to be ready to face the impending crisis, for the next few weeks would clarify the Congress position and what part India had to play.

¹ M.R. Masani (b. 1905); educated at Cathedral High School, the New High School, and the Elphinstone College, Bombay and the London School of Economics, London; called to the Lincoln's Inn; joint secretary of Congress Socialist Party 1934-39; member, constituent assembly, 1947-48; after independence served as member of the Lok Sabha; associated with the Swatantra Party; author of *A History of the Communist Party of India*.

45. Jamiyat al-Ulama and War

This is a translation of an Urdu leaflet entitled *Maujuda Jung Europe ke Motallique Jamiyat al Ulama-i Hind ki Majlis-i Amla ka Aham Bayaan*. (Important statement of the Working Committee of Jamiyat al-Ulama-i Hind on the European War.) The leaflet was based on the deliberations of the Jamiyat held at Meerut on 16-18 September 1939. It was forfeited by the Government of Bengal on 17 November 1939. Home (Political), F.No. 37, 1939, NAI

16-18 September 1939

Disturbance and agitation were bound to arise in the atmosphere of Europe on account of the war between Germany and Poland. But the nature of the mutual economic and political relations between the Powers on the face of the earth and the nations of the world has involved the entire human race in various embarrassments. The independent states and independent nations are considering from their respective points of view as to which side they should support and help in this war, while the governed states and subject nations are busy in preparing materials for their help at the instance of their respective masters, and by holding out the assurance of offering all kinds of vital and monetary sacrifices they are absorbed in the effort of winning the pleasure and approbation of their bounteous masters.

On what grounds is Germany's aggressive step against Poland based and what are its real causes are correctly known to God and these aggressors, but so far as indications and evidence go, it may be said that the aggression constitutes an oppression on the part of Germany's dictator, Herr Hitler.

There could be other conciliatory methods for solving the controversial issues between Germany and Poland, but these were not employed; and a *holi* with human blood began to be played even

before the efforts for maintenance of peace had been carried to the last point. But the question is: this matter related to Germany and Poland, why was it that instead of restricting it to Germany and Poland and confining bloodshed to these two nations alone, Britain and France plunged the British and French nations also into this fire? And why did they endanger countless human lives by extending a limited sphere of bloodshed?

War, is, after all, war; and ruin and destruction and the free flow (lit. cheapness) of human blood are its inevitable consequences. Several pleas have been advanced by Britain in reply to this question and Britain's participation in the war has been said to be not only lawful but also essential.

The first plea advanced is that as the British nation is a champion of the freedom of nations and the protection of freedom is its imperative duty, and as Herr Hitler by usurping the freedom of the Polish nation wanted to enslave them, it was the duty of Britain to push the British nation also into the fire of war for the protection of the freedom of the Polish nation and shed the blood of the British nation in order to maintain the freedom of the Poles.

The second plea advanced is that the Polish Government is a democratic Government while the German Government is a dictatorship, Britain is democratic and it is her duty to protect democracy and to root out dictatorship and to shed, if necessary, the blood of the British nation in this path.

The third plea advanced is that in taking the aggressive step Herr Hitler has committed oppression and that he is the oppressor while Poland is the oppressed. And as Britain regards support to the oppressed as a human duty she is compelled to shed the blood of the British nation in aiding and helping the oppressed Poland.

The fourth plea advanced is that whereas the League of Nations by declaring Poland to be an independent state took upon itself the responsibility of her protection and whereas the British Government is a member of the League of Nations, it is incumbent on Britain to offer as much sacrifice as may be required for the protection of Poland and to keep her immune from Germany's servitude.

By having recourse to these pleas the British Government justify their participation in the war between Germany and Poland and then appeal to the Governments and nations subject to them or under their influence to help Britain in the name of freedom, democracy, championship of the oppressed and the sanctity of promises and pledges. The Viceroy, too, has appealed to the Indians on these very grounds that all the Indians should help Britain in this war for the sake of freedom, democracy, championship of the oppressed and the sanctity of pledges.

Keeping in view the sublime Islamic, national and moral principles at this critical juncture, the Working Committee of the Jamiyat-al-ulama-i Hind has considered and examined this aspect of the question, namely, that if Britain has pushed her nation into the fire of the war between Germany and Poland, is it our Islamic, national or moral duty that we too should advice the Indians to jump into this fire and shed their blood in support of Britain?

At this stage we have had to take a comprehensive view of the pleas advanced by Britain so that there might be facility in arriving at some correct conclusion. So far as the intentions of British statesmen and Ministers are concerned, they are best known to the Omniscient alone, but so far as action and reaction is concerned we regret that there is no light of conviction and satisfaction in this for the Indians.

When we cast our looks on the first plea, namely, championship of the freedom of nations, the incidents of Czechoslovakia, Austria, Abyssinia and Albania present themselves before us; for, the freedom of these Government, the dictators committed carnage and plunder on a large scale and free men were enslaved by means of all kinds of oppression and bloodshed and by being subjected to destruction. And even if it be not true that the ruin and destruction of Abyssinia was

due to Britain's pledge to support (her), yet there is no doubt about it that Britain did not stand up for defending the freedom of these nations and that these nations were made the slaves of German and Italian dictators before her eyes. Besides, Britain herself has enslaved many nations and in order to suppress their struggle for freedom sheds their blood and goes on strengthening the chains of their bondage by having recourse to all kinds of oppression and violence.

The gruesome incidents of India and Palestine themselves are before our eyes. The bombardment of Waziristan and other independent tribes and the forced occupation of Hadramaut are clear as daylight. If Britain really approves of the principle of freedom of nations and is, a custodian of the freedom of the independent nations, all these actions and deeds of hers cannot be rightly construed.

When the second plea, that is, the championship of democracy and the eradication of dictatorship is considered, we fail to understand it in any of its bearings; for, dictatorship or democracy has to do with the German nation. If the German nation prefers the rule of its dictator, it is free to do so. Had there been a democratic Government in Germany and had she committed this kind of oppression with a view to usurping the freedom of Poland, would this oppression have been justified simply because the German Government, too, was democratic? If dictatorship seizes Poland would its destruction and devastation be greater than that created by Balfourism in Palestine on behalf of British democracy? And will all the devastations and bombardments made on behalf of democracy in Waziristan and among the independent tribes be held lawful simply because they were committed by British democracy? So far as India is concerned, this is the exhibition of Britain's love for democracy which first meets our eye, namely, the Viceroy arbitrarily declared India's participation in the war without ascertaining Indian public opinion.

At any rate, we fail to understand that if the British Government has involved Britain in the devastation and destruction of war for the defence of the Polish nation's democracy, why did it not protest Spanish democracy and why does it now show any readiness to establish democracy among the countries and nations under their own influence? The Jamiyat al-ulama likes the democratic principle, and the outline of Islamic democracy that is before it is far more elevated and sublime than the principle of European democracy. Under an Islamic democracy the majority as well as the minority led their lives in perfect serenity and in the security of their rights. The Jamiyat al-ulama considers the European dictatorship wrong, but it is a pity that it does not find even a semblance of democracy in this step taken by Britain towards war.

When the truth of the third plea, namely, championship of the oppressed is examined, Tripoli, Syria, Abyssinia, Albania, Czechoslovakia and Palestine were no less oppressed than Poland, why was their cause not championed? And why were they allowed to fall a prey to tyrants?

The fourth plea is the fulfillment of promises and the sanctity of pledges. It, too, comes out in its true colours in Queen Victoria's and all other preceding royal pledges as well as in the pledges given by Britain during the war of 1914 and their continuous violations. In spite of the repeated declarations of responsible British statesmen that whatever the consequences of the war no change was to be allowed to take place in the boundaries of states and the responsibility for the protection and sanctity of the Holy places was undertaken, the partition made by the victors of the vanquished states after the war, especially that of the Turkish Empire, and the manner in which they trampled upon the important component parts of the Holy Land are all before our eyes.

At all events, these are all the causes before our eyes, and we regret that we are unable to believe these pleas as real facts. The states, nations or individuals who on the ground of political expediency or personal ends have announced to help Britain are making much of these pleas. But we fail to understand how they can efface from the minds of the Muslims all those incidents which

have successively happened since the Great War and how they can induce any true Muslim or patriot to help Britain?

Again, if we consider from the point of view of the interests of India or of the Muslims as to whether our cooperation with Britain will be conducive to India or the Muslims themselves or not, then so far as facts and evidence go there is no light before us. By suffering all sorts of ruin and devastation during the last Great War and by offering the highest sacrifices in men and money, India consolidated British Imperialism and prolonged the duration of her servitude. How then can they be reassured now that support to Britain at this juncture would confer freedom on them, or the victory and consolidation of British Imperialism would not become the cause of Britain's further autocracy and consolidation of imperialism under the guise of democracy.

The amendment of the Government of India Act by means of which even the partial autonomy of the provinces has been damaged or withdrawn may be an alarm signal to us.

The goal of the Jamiyat al-ulama has ever been complete independence, and it regards this as its religious, political and moral right. And anything which stands in the way of this right is unbearable to it.

At any rate, in the existing circumstances the Working Committee of the Jamiyat al-ulama does not find any justification from any point of view for lending help to British Imperialism in the war. Moreover, in its opinion it is essential and necessary that in view of the importance and delicacy of the situation all Muslims, nay, all Indians should unitedly come to a decision on behalf of India, in keeping with their self-respect and dignity, and jointly adopt the same path; for, this is the true basis of their deliverance and freedom.

46. India and the War: To Secretaries,
Provincial Congress Committees, 17 September 1939
SWJN, Vol. 10, pp. 141-43

Dear Friend,

For many years past all of us have lived on the verge of a world crisis and, preoccupied as we were with our vital national problems, the Congress had often given thought to the approaching crisis and laid down our broad policy in regard to it. Now that crisis has come and war rages in Europe, in addition to the Far Eastern war, which has now been going on for two and half years, every Congressman has been deeply moved by this turn of events and has given earnest consideration to our duty at this juncture. Not only the directions of the Congress during these past years, but also the very basis of the Congress and its reason for existence compel us to play a worthy and effective part in the development of events. We have not been onlookers of events in India passively adapting ourselves to what happened. The Congress has essentially been a body of action and struggle in the cause of India's freedom and has shaped India's destiny for many years. That grave responsibility has to be shouldered afresh by the Congress in this crisis which affects India as well as the rest of the world.

As you are aware the Working Committee have given the most earnest consideration to these developments and have issued a statement in which they have clearly laid down India's attitude. We invite your attention to this statement so that your provincial and local committees and all Congressmen should appreciate the position fully and act in accordance with the advice given. That statement is a dispassionately worded document, clarifying the issues as they affect India, in simple language and indicating the road that India has to travel in these troubled times. The implications of that statement and the possible developments must be clear to you.

The Committee has viewed the crisis in the widest perspective and has considered the cause of Indian freedom in relation to world freedom. We who claim to labour for great ends in India cannot lose sight of these perspectives. This crisis will not pass, as the Working Committee say, leaving the essential structure of the present-day world intact. The world is going to be refashioned and India is going to play her part in this refashioning.

Many questions arise as to our day-to-day activities more especially during this period when our final decision has not been taken. We shall endeavour to answer them as they arise and as they are put to us. As you are aware a special sub-committee¹ consisting of us three has been appointed to deal with the war emergency and we shall always be at your disposal for reference or advice. Our sub-committee will of course be guided by Mahatma Gandhi and the Congress President, Sri Rajendra Prasad.

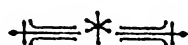
Two matters, however, have to be borne in mind for they are of essential importance. Whatever the developments might be, we can only face them with dignity and strength if our organisation is well prepared and has put an end to internal controversies and conflicts. No lover of the Congress and of Indian freedom may do anything which impairs our unity and joint will for action. We have all to rise above our petty selves and become, in this crisis of our destiny, true soldiers of India, speaking and acting together with dignity and forbearance and in accordance with the ideals and principles we have cherished.

Our first duty is to tone up our organisation and keep it in fit condition for whatever demands might be made upon it. Secondly, we must not individually or severally, act or speak hastily precipitating a development before its proper time. We must function in accordance with the spirit of the Working Committee's statement and not overreach it or believe it in our word or deeds. That would be a disservice to the larger cause we seek to serve, as well as to this unity, which is essential in our ranks.

Your provincial and local committees should give the widest publicity to the Working Committee's statement and explain its implications, more particularly the essential need for tightening up our organisation and preparing it for all the difficulties and trials we have to face. Unity and discipline have to be emphasized, as well as that the final decision has not been taken yet and this will depend on circumstances and developments. Our position has been frankly and clearly stated before India and the world. To that we shall adhere, and seek, above all, to follow paths which lead to world freedom and reorganization which must be based on our freedom. But any action taken by an individual Congressman which goes beyond the Working Committee's statement will not only lead to a loosening of our discipline but to a weakening of our cause and to controversy when we have to present a united front. This has to be avoided. Strength will not come to us by individual action or by brave speeches but by discipline and united effort. The hour of trial has come again upon us. Let us be worthy of it.

Yours Sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru
Vallabhbhai Patel
Abul Kalam Azad

¹ The war sub-committee was appointed by the Working Committee in September 1939. It functioned until the Ramgarh Congress in March 1940.



47. What Agreement? Can there be a compromise between our slavery and these laws?

Pamphlet by Sajjad Zaheer,¹ published in *Naya Hindustan*, 17 September 1939, Proscribed Publication No. 1190, NAI

17 September 1939

The danger that threatened, the danger that we have been warning the socialist countries about, has ultimately arrived at our doorstep.

The day after the outbreak of war the imperialist forces launched a massive attack.

The Government of India has imposed five ordinances in India as of today. There is no need to go into details. None of our rights are any longer sacrosanct. We will not be permitted to hold meetings against the military policy, make speeches, or take our processions. The government is free to arrest anyone on mere suspicion and keep them under surveillance for as long as they wish. There is an embargo on the free movement of citizens from one part of the country to another. Houses can be searched at will and property, moveable and immovable, can be confiscated by the Government whenever it wishes. The Government can close down whichever newspaper they wish.

These are not Laws but the End to all Laws

These are not laws but an end to the rule of law. This is Martial Law.

We must not believe that these powers, these laws to end the rule of law, will not be used.

Today, the freedom of any Indian, who hankers after independence or follows the Congress policy, is sacrosanct.

The Dual Politics of Empire

We have news that the governmental machinery is ready to implement these black laws.

Concentration camps and special jails, as in Germany, are ready for us also. These are meant not just for the socialists and communists and kisan sabha workers but for every Congressman, from the highest to the lowest rung.

On the other hand, parleys with Mahatma Gandhi also continue. Chamberlain and the Viceroy declare that they are fighting this war in the cause of justice, truth and freedom. This is absolutely false. Those who have crushed the freedom of thirty-five crores of human beings cannot fight for freedom and rights.

This is a War not for Freedom but for Profits

The imperialists are fighting for profits. They are fighting to save their own ill-gotten gains from Germany's fascist dacoits. What does this prove? The pistol of ordinances is held in one hand and is being used to threaten the Congress, the peasant worker movement and our freedom movement.

On the other hand, they continue to hold talks for agreement with us because they want India's help in this bloody and terrible war. Our wealth, property and lives are not expandable that we should offer them at the altar of imperialist gods.

Our Stand is Clear

Mahatmajji and the Working Committee must make it quite clear that there is no question of any agreement with British imperialism unless India is granted freedom the rule by illegal ordinances is put to an end and we are given control of the armed forces, treasury, railways, telegraph and

post. An agreement is possible only between two independent nations, not between a free nation and a subject nation, between the ruler and the ruled.

Our Work is Cut Out

The need of the hour is to strengthen the hands of our Congress party, explain the anti-war policy of the Congress to citizens in every village city and street in India. The local chapters in the Congress Committee in every street, city and district must pass resolutions against the war and preparation for satyagraha, enroll a strong volunteer corps as soon as possible, explain the realities of this imperialist war to every peasant and worker sabha in the country.

There is no time to be wasted. The imperialist assault has begun. It is quite possible that the Congress, kisan sabhas, workers' unions, the Socialist Party, the Youth League, etc. may soon be declared illegal and the imperialist jails will once again be filled with freedom fighters.

This is a great historic day. In the coming days our endurance, courage, patriotism and spirit of sacrifice will be put to test. We must commence the battle for freedom very quickly, because we are convinced that there can be no compromise between the Congress and imperialism.

There should soon be a mammoth general strike in every corner of India in which every worker, peasant and urban workers should participate.

We must not pay a pie by way of tax or revenue until our demand for complete freedom is conceded.

We must face every kind of oppression and atrocity in the country by launching a strong movement and the merciless attacks of the imperialist forces must be thwarted by presenting an organised and unified front.

Brother! Comrades! Convey this message of revolution and freedom to every Indian. Take the country towards revolution through your organisation, revolutionary fervour and enthusiasm. Please remember that even if they are declared illegal, we must continue our movement through the Congress and other organisations.

Imperialism and its black laws will not succeed in breaking our organisation. This should be understood by every individual. People may be thrown in jails. Millions of workers and peasants and the common people may be imprisoned. But our leaders must continue to lead the movement and take the country onwards on the road to freedom.

The long, dark night of subjugation and poverty will come to an end one day. The exploitation of India will stop. Better days will arrive.

¹ Sajjad Zaheer (1905–73), published in *Naya Hindustan*, 17 September 1939, Proscribed Publications No. 1190, NAI. The author—*Banne Bhai*—was the son of Wazir Hasan, the Architect of the Congress-League Lucknow Pact concluded in 1916. He was educated in Lucknow and Oxford and was, along with Mulk Raj Anand, Mohammad Tasir and others, a founder of the Progressive Writers' Movement, on his return to India he became closely associated with Jawaharlal Nehru, as were some of his other socialist and communist colleagues elected to the Central Committee of the Communist Party in 1943 and edited its official org. n., *Qaumi Jang*. Sajjad Zaheer was a brilliant writer and had a profound influence on his generation of creative writers.

48. Reactions to the CWC Statement

Haig to Viceroy [Tel.], 17 September 1939, Haig Papers, Acc. No. 2068, NAI

17 September 1939

Your telegram 1950-S, dated September 16. I have no doubt that all my Ministers are genuinely anxious to continue in office and ready if permitted by the higher command to give full cooperation

in prosecution of the war. I think in so far as Working Committee's resolution may be interpreted as making this development less probable they are definitely disappointed. But the majority of them seem to believe that a way out will be found. Kidwai speaks optimistically. They certainly do not regard the resolution as closing door on cooperation. There is an idea that through the influence and mediation of Gandhi a satisfactory solution may be found.

2. The attitude of the Ministry to our present problems is satisfactory. Recently they were afraid that some district officers were taking action under the Ordinance against anti-war activities which was upsetting Congressmen at this stage. Instruction was therefore sent to all District Magistrates that they should not take such action without prior reference to the Government. Yesterday I received a paper which showed that a Congress MLA was endeavouring to raise trouble on account of perfectly normal activities of recruiting for the territorial force. I called attention of Kidwai to this in a note. I said I fully appreciate that at this moment the Ministry were anxious that issues, such as active discouragement of recruiting and opposition to the war, should not be brought out unnecessarily into the open, and in pursuit of that policy we had warned District Magistrate to be cautious not to take action without first obtaining the orders of Government. I said that if that policy was to be effective it was essential that equal restraint should be exercised on the other side and that the rank and file of the Congress should not openly encourage anti-war activities or oppose recruiting. Kidwai fully appreciated this point of view and has had an urgent message sent by the provincial Congress Committee to all subordinate committees to the effect that pending the next meeting of the AICC Congressmen are directed to refrain from delivering speeches on the Congress attitude towards war or acting in a manner which tends to contravene the orders of the British Government in India for the successful prosecution of the war. The situation is not easy, for there are considerable numbers of left wing men who are out of control of the Ministry and are trying to work up agitation against the war. But so far as the Ministry can control this difficult intermediate situation they are doing their best.

3. I think the general feeling here including that of many Congressmen is disappointment that the Working Committee have taken a line which presents obvious dangers of leading to non-cooperation, a realisation that a good deal of what is said in the resolution can probably be written off as intended to placate the extremer elements, and a belief that a solution may yet be possible. I should judge that a solution is earnestly desired by the majority of Congress supporters.

49. On the CWC resolution

Mahadev Desai to G.D. Birla, 18 September 1939. G.D. Birla, *Bapu: A Unique Association*, Vol. 3, 1977, pp. 344-45

*On Way to Wardha,
September 18, 1939*

My Dear Ghanshiyamdassji,

I have told you the circumstances in which the WC resolution came to be passed. Since then Bapu's statement had appeared in the Press I think it saves the situation admirably well. There could not be a more luminous exposition of the WC's resolution, and if you have not already sent this statement to two or three friends in London you should now do so. The *Statesman's* article is astonishingly good. You should send a copy of that article too. I think Russia's entry in the war makes our way easier—and also Britain's way easier to make a wholehearted response to the Congress gesture. Otherwise they would be done for. And if Japan joins Russia, we might be called upon to bear in a fair amount of the brunt of the war. Heaven alone knows what is in store

for us. But the principle of non-violence by which we have been swearing these 20 years seems to be under a heavy eclipse. My heart sinks within me as I think of the implications of the principle which are quite clear to me, but which it seems so impossible for us to live up to. Bapu himself is going through a terrible mental struggle—if not anguish, and I think he even prays that God may take him away without putting an unbearable strain on him.

I am going to Madras on one year's Ambassadorial missions, to acquaint CR with the whole situation and to tell him how much he can do at this juncture. I know you will be able to put two and two together.

Yours,
Mahadev

50. On the CWC Resolution

Haig to Linlithgow [Tel.], 19 September 1939, Haig Papers, Acc. No. 2068, NAI

19 September 1939

Continuation My telegram 264/G of 1 September 18. I have today seen Mrs Pandit who has just returned from Allahabad where she and Kidwai have held discussions with Nehru. I judge from what she says that Nehru was mainly responsible for policy of Working Committee resolution, and that majority of Working Committee might otherwise have been content with something more accommodating. He is influenced partly by past commitments and general principles, partly by desire to keep Congress together as long as possible. Anything less uncompromising would have lost support of those inclined to the left. If eventual decision is for cooperation he wants to bring Congress in as united as possible.

2. Nehru seems to desire two incompatible things. He talks of the necessity of getting a declaration that independence is the ultimate goal, though he must know it is quite impossible to get such a declaration from the British Government. On the other hand it would seem he is anxious that India should play its part in the war. When faced, as he must be soon, with inescapable choice between these two positions Mrs Pandit suggests he might come down in favour of supporting the war and be content with some fresh statement of dominion status being the goal, coupled with some practical arrangements for associating those who represent popular opinion with war activities at the Centre.

3. At the moment Congress are waiting for a gesture from Simla. The intention of appointing a sub-committee was that they would be able to conduct any conversation with Your Excellency without I understand referring back to the Working Committee. Nehru by himself would probably be able to conduct conversations with authority and it looks as if his word will in fact be decisive. I think he is awaiting an invitation to visit Your Excellency.

4. There is a general feeling that an early decision is urgently required. The present situation in this Province gets rapidly more difficult. I have today seen a report from the CID, which gives a disquieting picture of the rapidly developing organisation and activities of the leftists and revolutionaries of all kinds. A great impetus will be given to these activities by the tour of Bose in this Province which begins I think tomorrow and may last about a week. Mrs Pandit said that the interest and enthusiasm being worked up particularly among students in favour of Bose was striking and formidable. She realises clearly that if Congress decide to cooperate they will have to tackle the leftists at once and vigorously. But it is dangerous to let this movement gather strength unchecked.

5. Nehru comes to Lucknow tomorrow and proposes to stay for a week so as to be in close touch with Ministers. I think it is realised that at any moment especially during Bose's visit there

might be developments which would require important decisions as to action by the Government. This all emphasizes the great desirability of earliest possible decision as the attitude of Congress to the war.

51. Mahatma's Reply to Critics

Editorial, *Tribune*, 19 September 1939

19 September 1939

Mahatma Gandhi's second statement¹ on the war situation is even more important than his first.² The first was a mere expression of opinion. The second is a reasoned defence of that opinion. A correspondent sent him a spirited protest,³ taking vigorous exception to various parts of his first statement. 'If you shed tears over the possible destruction of the English House of Parliament and West Minister Abbey,' he said, 'have you not tears for the possible destruction of the monuments of Germany?' The answer, as the Mahatma points out, is obvious. He was no more prepared to contemplate with equanimity the possible destruction of the monuments of Germany than he was prepared to contemplate with equanimity the possible destruction of the Houses of Parliament and the Westminster Abbey in England. Did he not say that he would not care to erect the freedom of his country on the remains of despoiled Germany?

But the question, as the Mahatma rightly says, is irrelevant. The whole issue in this case is whether it is Germany or Britain and France with whom the responsibility for the war rests. On that point there is no possible room for doubt. With practically the whole of the civilized world minus Herr Hitler himself and his misguided dupes and companions in crime, Mahatma Gandhi has come to the conclusion that the German dictator is responsible for the war. This is not because the Mahatma is convinced that Germany has no just claim to Danzig or the Polish Corridor, but because she has resorted not to the method of reason, negotiation and arbitration, but to the method of naked and unadulterated violence to enforce his claim. 'The whole world,' said the Mahatma, 'is anxious that Herr Hitler should allow his demand to be examined by an imperialist tribunal. If he succeeds in his present attempt, his success will be no proof of the justness of his claim. It will be proof that the law of the jungle is still a great force in human affairs.' And if the responsibility for the war rests with Herr Hitler, surely he, more than any one else, must accept responsibility for its natural and inevitable consequences.

It is no answer to this contention to say that Herr Hitler is a product of the Treaty of Versailles.⁴ After all, the history of modern Europe did not begin with the Treaty of Versailles. If it is true that Hitler is a product of the Treaty of Versailles, can it be denied that that treaty itself was a product of the wanton violation of solemn treaties by Germany, her arrogant treatment of such treaties as so many scraps of paper. The plain fact is that we are in this matter in the grip of a vicious circle in which one act of aggression—one international crime—leads on to another. Any attempt to unsettle the hitherto accepted results of all or any of these acts of aggression by force would simply extend the vicious circle without settling any issue finally. Force never decides. It only complicates an already complex situation and even where it seemingly establishes peace, the peace is only a prelude to a more devastating war.

Nor is it any answer to the intention to say, as the correspondent does, that others in Herr Hitler's position would have acted and have as a matter of fact acted and he has been doing 'Is England's record in India', says the correspondent, 'any better than Hitler's in another part of the world in similar circumstances? Hitler is but an infant pupil of the old imperialist England and France.' To this question, which so many persons who are either incapable of thinking, or who

have not given themselves the trouble to think calmly have been asking, that Mahatma gives a reply which is at once pertinent and convincing. 'No one has resisted England more effectively perhaps than I have. And my desire for and power of resistance remain unabated. But there are seasons for speech and action, as there are seasons for silence and inaction.' Again, 'In assessing the present merits, the past misdeeds of England and the good deeds of Germany are irrelevant.' What the correspondent, like so many others, fails to see is that the very fact that India bitterly complained of certain measures and policies followed by Britain in this country elsewhere. It makes it equally incumbent upon her to express her warm appreciation of Britain's action in resisting these measures and policy in her own case would be a matter of mere self-interest, and of no reasoned conviction and would have no moral value.

¹ See *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, vol. 70, pp. 169–71.

² This appeared under the title 'The Simla Visit' and was published in *Hindu* on 5 September. Gandhi made clear that he had no authority to speak for the Congress, but his own sympathies were with England and France from a purely humanitarian point of view and that he could not contemplate without being stirred to the very depth the destruction of London. He was not thinking of India's deliverance. He said: 'It will come, but what will it be worth if England and France fall or if they come our victorious, over Germany ruined and humbled'.

³ Though this protest is available in *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, and in Tendulkar's biography, the name of the correspondent is not mentioned.

⁴ The Treaty of Versailles imposed humiliating terms on Germany, penalties, reparations, demilitarization and disarmament. Territorially, Germany had to cede Eupen and Malmedy to Belgium, restore Alsace and Lorraine to France. The Coal mines of Saar were placed under the League of Nations; in the South, Germany ceded a small strip of territory to Czechoslovakia, and was debarred from uniting with Austria. In the north, a part of the former Grand Duchy of Schleswig was made the subject of a plebiscite, which resulted in favourable votes for Denmark. In the east, Germany ceded Lithuania and Memel to allied powers. To Poland, she ceded Posen and a greater part of the province of West Prussia. Danzig became a free city, entrusting the conduct of its foreign relations to Poland. Plebiscites were to take place in the Marienwerder district of West Prussia in the Allenstein district of East Prussia, and in Upper Silesia.

52. Nehru on the Congress Cooperation

Speech at Allahabad, 20 September 1939. *Hindustan Times*, 21 September 1939, *SWJN*, Vol. 10, pp. 145–48

20 September 1939

The whole world is passing through a revolutionary phase and we in India, occupied as we are with our own affairs, must not forget that the political and economic happenings in any one part of the world affect the whole world. We might feel that these events are remote or distant from us and our interest in them might tend to be only theoretical. All these new things happening in the world are not just theoretical only. It is necessary that we should look at the happenings of the past few years with practical comprehension. The Congress has been laying down its foreign policy for the last eighteen years or so, at least since 1927 in Madras. Our different resolutions on war have also been taking shape according to the changing of world conditions.

The root causes of the last war were embedded in the great industrial advancement of the Western countries throughout the nineteenth century, and the consequent struggle for raw materials and possessions in Asia, Africa and China.

Inwardly England wanted to maintain the Hitler and Mussolini regimes lest they should be replaced by socialistic or communistic states. However, England was at the same time getting alarmed at the increasing powers of Hitler and Mussolini.

At the time of the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia by Hitler, England and France absolutely ignored Russia. The policy of appeasement resulted in increasing Hitler's powers. In 1935, England

entered into an Anglo-German naval treaty unknown to France and in contravention of the Treaty of Versailles.¹ This alarmed France which came to an agreement with Italy that if she invaded Abyssinia, France would not interfere.² Alarmed at the increasing strength of Hitler and Mussolini, England and France turned at long last towards Russia for negotiations.³

The Russo-German Pact⁴ is a non-aggression pact. That Russia has made such non-aggression pacts with other powers is not beyond suspicion. This pact is a very clever move and assures Hitler of safety from attack on one frontier. One thing clear is that this pact has brought about war even though, perhaps, ultimately it may not have been avoided.

As for the Russian invasion of Poland,⁵ the situation is not clear. It may be that the invasion was really undertaken because of the danger of Germany becoming too strong. No one can say clearly at present what it means. We will know about it by and by.

England and France are better off economically than Germany. It is likely that America will ultimately be dragged into the war on Britain's side, if not actively, at least with war materials, food and money. England and France are better equipped for a prolonged war which will wear out Germany. In these circumstances what Russia does would be very material.

We always maintained we should be free to decide whether to go to war or not. Our sympathies are not with Hitlerism. If India were free today, we might or might not jump into the war straight away. We might join it later on.

When Indian troops were sent out recently, the Working Committee advised the Congress members to boycott the Central Assembly. We made our policy clear towards Britain. Our resolution is meant to be acted upon. At the outbreak of the war the Government of India Amendment Act was rushed through the House of Commons in 11 minutes, without seriously considering how it would affect us.

The ordinances have been promulgated. So far as the legal aspect goes, we have not been treated as a 'free people'. The princes also have expressed their loyalty. Such expressions have been often made and repeated and are not surprising. But the princes have affirmed their loyalty in the name of democracy which does not exist in their own states.

Some Congressmen have also said that we should at once act upon our resolutions. But there are difficulties. We cannot look at these things in a theoretical manner only. We want to evolve a new world order to end the present state of affairs. Whatever the results of the present war, new forces will come into being after it. We should not in this moment of tension and excitement take a step which we might not be able to implement in the eyes of the world. All these matters were before the Congress Working Committee when they after long discussions issued their statement.

I would require you all to read it well and follow its argument. England and France say that they are fighting for democracy. We want to see the end of the law of the jungle but we also want to see the end of imperialism. Some points are clear. Our free status should be recognized. Secondly, the Working Committee's statement has made clear that this declaration of our freedom should be followed by a practical proof. If we were free, we could have raised a national army.

As regards recruitment and help with war material, I would say during the last war the foundations of our industrialism were laid, even though Britain might not have liked it. I feel that possibilities of this industrial development during this war are tremendous. Lastly, in the final peace, India should have a free voice not only with regard to her own matters, but also in a new world order as free nation.

We have taken a dignified stand so that we can show the world that we can take wise and statesman like decisions. We have acquired a responsible status in the eyes of the world. In a changing world, it is curious that the minds of those who are responsible for the Government of India, especially of those who are representatives of the British Government in India, have not changed.

We must now speak as a dignified free state understanding the world situation. We have not taken the final step; our final step will depend upon a gesture from Britain. There is no bargaining spirit. Bargaining would not be compatible with our professions of freedom. It is up to the British Government to respond.

What is ahead of us we do not know. We must forget our petty affairs and be united. If we are a responsible nation, we should sink our differences based on politics or religion. We should act as a united and responsible nation. Britain's is a decaying imperialism, but we should bear in mind that Hitlerism is also an imperialism and a young and rising imperialism. We should prepare to protect ourselves from both. Whatever strength we have gained so far has been through our strength of unity and sacrifice.

¹ The British Government, soon after protesting against Hitler's violation of the Versailles Treaty, signed a naval pact with Germany on 18 June 1935, which violated the naval clause of the Versailles Treaty and gave Hitler the right to build all the warships his shipyards could construct during the next ten years.

² In 1935 Laval, then Premier of France negotiated a secret treaty with Mussolini giving him a free hand in Abyssinia.

³ On 18 March 1939, the Soviet Union proposed a conference to set up an anti-Hitler coalition; on 15 April Britain and France made their first proposals to Moscow, on 17 April the Soviet Union Countered with a proposal for a triple alliance. The negotiations were ineffectual and did not end in any agreement

⁴ The Nazi-Soviet ten-year non-aggression pact was signed on 24 August 1939

⁵ The Soviet Union invaded Poland on 17 September 1939.

53. Congress and War

Erskine to Linlithgow, 20 September 1939, Linlithgow Collection, Acc. No. 2203, NAI

20 September 1939

[Extracts]

2. The main item of interest is the local reaction to the resolution on the War issued by the Congress Working Committee.

3. This resolution has met with very severe criticism in most quarters in Madras and the Congress party themselves are far from being pleased about it. With the exception of a small section of extremists, mostly from the Telugu country, the population of South India would like to cooperate whole-heartedly in the War, and the Working Committee of the Congress have certainly not increased their prestige by their present attitude.

4. Some of my Ministers, Mr Ramanathan¹ in particular, have already expressed their desire to do all they can to help and although the Premier is silent he also is privately very annoyed at the bargaining propensities displayed by the Congress High Command. I understand that the Premier and most of the other Ministers propose to attend the meeting of All India Congress Committee to be held early next month, and in view of their known desire to cooperate this will, I believe, be a good thing....

5. There have been sporadic anti-war and anti-recruiting speeches in a few districts, but they do not seem to have had any effect, and for the moment their authors are hardly worth troubling about. But of course, this sort of thing cannot be allowed to go on for long and I imagine that after the meeting of the All India Congress Committee we shall be in a better position to know how matters stand. For it will then be clear whether the Congress are going to assist in putting a stop to speeches of this kind or whether some other Ministry or even the Governor acting under Section 93 is going to be in charge of affairs. But, as Madras is not an important recruiting area, I feel that a few unfortunate speeches down here do not matter provided that the present leniency is not allowed to continue indefinitely. We are now warning the makers of these speeches that if they

continue to do this sort of propaganda they will be prosecuted under the Defence of India Ordinance and I hope that this will have the desired effect....

6. You may be interested to learn that, as in Orissa, an attempt was made here to get the Legislature called together at once in order to pass a resolution of support for the King-Emperor and the War.

7. I took the view that to move a resolution of this description would have been merely embarrassing for it would have been worse than useless unless it had been passed practically unanimously and the Congress Party could not of course support it. I feel, if such a resolution is to be passed, that it should be moved by the Premier himself and that possibility depends on the eventual attitude of Congress Party as a whole. The individual behind the movement for this resolution was V. Reddi....

¹ S. Ramanathan (1895–1968); educated at Pachaiyappa's and Christian College in Madras; secretary of the Tamil Nadu branch of the All India Spinners' Association; Congress member in the Legislative Assembly (1937); Minister for Public Information, (1937–39).

5.4. Political Situation in UP

Haig to Viceroy [Tel.: Immediate], 21 September 1939, Haig Papers, Acc. No. 2068, NAI

21 September 1939

Continuation my telegram No. 265/G dated 12th September. I should be grateful for any indication of policy Your Excellency could give me. Situation in this Province continues to deteriorate and it is dangerous to allow it to go much further. Administratively left wing activities are a growing menace. Politically the large body of right wing Congress who are really in favour of cooperation are muzzled, while the left wing have the field to themselves and are strengthening their position daily. So far as this Province is concerned situation urgently demands earliest possible decision as to whether Congress will or will not cooperate.

5.5. Note of an interview with Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru on 21 September

Haig Papers, Microfilm, Acc. No. 2068, NAI

21 September 1939

In the course of conversation with Mrs Pandit yesterday, I mentioned that I was going up today for a meeting of the Indian and Eastern Newspaper Society at Simla and said that, although it was a purely business meeting, I had no doubt that the editors present would discuss the political situation in India amongst themselves. I felt sure that they were all as anxious as I was that India should enter the war united, but I was not very clear in my own exactly how this was going to be brought about.

Mrs Pandit then suggested that I should have a talk with her brother, who was in the house and whom I had met once or twice previously.

Pt Nehru and I accordingly had rather more than an hour together and the interview was a very frank and friendly one. The following note is accurate as regards the general sense and substantially accurate as regards the wording of Pt Nehru's remarks. The first part of it largely repeats the points already made in the Working Committee's published statement but I think it is nevertheless worth giving.

Pt Nehru said that India would not enter the war for the preservation of the status quo or, for that matter, for the sake of Poland, which was hardly more democratic than Nazi Germany. (Czechoslovakia would have been quite another story). The Congress wanted a clear statement of Britain's war aims, to the effect that there should be no dictated peace; no indemnities, self-determination for all small countries and no transfer of colonies without regard to the interests of the inhabitants. Moreover, colonies should not be considered 'possessions'. I said that I could see no particular difficulty about any of this. No one would be stupid enough to expect to be able to collect war indemnities and, after the last experience, no one would be stupid enough again to dictate a peace without admitting the Germans to the peace conference. As for colonies, Britain had already said that she was willing to consider some system of international control. I asked Pt Nehru whether this was what he had in mind. He said that it was at any rate a possible solution worth discussing. But I gathered that he expected a repudiation of 'Imperialism', preferably in so many words. I said that much had already been done since the last war by the Statute of Westminster and asked him whether he thought that the Dominions had anything to complain about. He replied that he could not speak for the Dominions but that, so far as he could see, they appeared to be satisfied with their present status and their freedom to change it if they desired to do so.

As for India, Congress wanted a clear declaration that she should be free to determine her own destinies after the war. This would fall under two heads (a) the declaration itself (b) its practical application. I said that it was easy enough to generalize about such a declaration but no so easy to put it into words. Would Pt Nehru himself be able and willing to draft it in such a form that it would satisfy all the conflicting interests in India? He replied 'I don't know whether I could, but certainly I should have no right as an individual to attempt to do so and commit my colleagues. In any case, I consider that it is for the British Government to draft it'. I formed the impression that Pt Nehru at least would be satisfied with something in fairly general terms, provided that India's right to 'determine her own destinies' was expressly stated.

As regards the application, he said that the question of drafting a constitution in legal form could be left until after the war. Indeed he thought that for the two countries to fight the war together as equal partners to a successful conclusion would remove most of the difficulties.

I asked what exactly he meant by fighting as equal partners. He said that India should be placed in exactly the same position as, for example, Austria. She should be free to determine the extent of her war effort, looking first to her own defence, and should not be regarded as merely a reservoir of man-power to be used as 'canon fodder'. If more troops were to be raised to be sent overseas, it should be with the consent of the Indian people. What he had in mind was the formation of some sort of national militia from which recruits could be drawn. He himself volunteered the remark that Congress quite realised that war was a technical business and that there could be no question of any interference on their part with the military authorities in their control of the forces. But India should have the right to decide, like Canada and Australia, whether she should raise an expeditionary force in addition to the present regular army and how many men she could find for it, the local defence of India being the first consideration. She would also expect to be directly represented at the Peace Conference—but not, as last time, by the Maharajah of Bikaner.

Similarly, India's industrial contribution, which would be even more important than in the last war and would presumably be organised in a less haphazard fashion, should be determined with the consent of the Indian people.

I asked him whether what he envisaged was some sort of National War Council and if such a council was organised, whether he would be willing to serve on it; he said that he presumed that, that was the sort of organisation that was necessary and, as far as serving on it, 'it does not matter

whether it is I or another—it is not a question of individuals'. I gathered, however, that he would in fact, be willing to do so.

Pt Nehru said that he quite realised that this insistence on the declaration and on some guarantee of how it should be applied in practice might be represented as bargaining. 'But', he said, 'it is no use either Mahatma Gandhi or I pledging the full support of India, however much we might like to do so, unless we can carry the country with us. That will be impossible unless we can convince Indians that the war is in their interests and not merely in the interests of Great Britain.'

He added that he quite realised that the difficulty lay in giving Indians more responsibility at the Centre at once and he did not wish to minimize it. The Provinces would function satisfactorily as at present. At the same time, he repeated that he thought it would be easier to bring about in war time when there was no need to give constitutional form to such changes as might be made to meet the emergency. He himself raised the question of the Muslims and said that Congress was anxious to secure their cooperation. But if that was impossible, he did not see why they should not be willing to cooperate with Great Britain in the prosecution of the war on the same terms as the Congress itself.

I then asked him what about the Princes and said that obviously they could not be thrown over board when the British Government was assured of their support. He replied that Congress had no wish to do anything to diminish the prestige or dignity of the Rulers. They considered that the forms of government in the majority of the States were obviously an anachronism and must eventually be replaced by representative institutions. The small States must also inevitably disappear, since they had no economic or social justification. But what Congress wanted to do was to leave the door open, not indefinitely, but for as long a period as possible, so that the princes should come in with British India of their own free will. I asked him whether he would consider the States forming a separate Federating unit but he said Congress would not like that, since they could not contemplate India being divided, with the States as a permanent Ulster. However, there was no hurry and, so far as the war was concerned, he saw no great difficulty about cooperation. He added that the British Government should really not lay so much stress on the Treaties. Most of these were more than a hundred years old and many of them dictated on the battlefield to meet a set of circumstances long since past. So far as he was aware, there were no other treaties, except possibly that between Britain and Portugal, which had remained so long unchanged.

The most important part of the interview, in my opinion, concerned the time factor. I said that perhaps HE the Viceroy and the British Government were waiting to see what happened at the AICC meeting on October 7 and expected the Congress to formulate some more precise demand before making any declaration. Pt Nehru replied, 'I sincerely hope that they are doing nothing of the kind, for I can tell you quite definitely that the Congress has no intention of doing any such thing. If the AICC meets without any gesture from Great Britain, then it will meet in a very different atmosphere and I am afraid the opportunity will have been lost.'

He added that he suspected that the India Office would hold up the declaration and would not realise that the time was the essence of the business. I explained, what he did not know, that Sir Findlater Steward and Colonel Muirhead had both taken up other appointments and said that the war would probably make it difficult to secure Cabinet consideration at short notice. To this he said 'They can move fast enough when they like. They passed the Amending Bill to the Government of India Act through all its stages in eleven minutes. At any rate, if they want India wholeheartedly with them, they must realise the importance of this and find the time. Less than two weeks are left.'

Finally, I asked Pt Nehru whether he would be willing to discuss the whole matter with HE the Viceroy if he received an invitation to do so. To this he replied 'I cannot, of course, discuss it with

him as a private individual but only as a member of the Working Committee any more than he could discuss it with me as a private individual. Mahatma Gandhi's case is different, for he is in an exceptional position.' I have little doubt, however, that Pt Nehru would, in fact, be glad to have an opportunity of discussion as soon as possible, since I am left with a very strong impression that he is personally anxious to assist to the full in the prosecution of the war.

56. India and War

Viceroy to Secretary of State (Tel.), 21 September 1939, Linlithgow Papers, Acc. No. 2334, NAI

[Extracts]

I am pretty clear that we should be wise to start now to discuss tactics as between ourselves. We are faced as you will see with a position, of conditional cooperation. So far as the Muslims are concerned, I do not believe that in the long run they would refuse to play, and the Sikander Fazlul Huq element occupies a position of great strength. But even that section has in the interests of Muslim unity to temporize with Jinnah and his friends from the Muslim-minority Provinces; and we must therefore at the moment regard the Muslims to some extent as bargainers, however little, their sympathies may be with non-cooperation. As regards Congress, I do not myself believe that they want to run our and I am sure that Ministers, if called upon to do so, would leave office with the greatest reluctance. I am equally sure that they would be miserable in opposition, or out of power. Be that as it may, however, Congress, having rejected Gandhi's lead, are bargaining hard, and are tending to commit themselves so far that it may be very difficult for them to draw back. We must also take full account of past record to which Aney referred and the difficulty of sudden and radical change over from policy of 'smashing the constitution' to full co-cooperation with Government, more particularly in face of another new element—the strong and increasing pressure from Subhas Bose and the Left-Wing—which is clearly of great immediate concern to the Working Committee.

Public opinion in the country is beyond any question definitely very sympathetic to the Allies and anxious to cooperate. They have been in the last couple of days considerably shaken by the Russian change of front¹ and risk of Russian attacks by air has become common topic of discussion with amazing swiftness. But, wherever sympathies may lie, the individual tends to be moved by the political maneuvers of the Congress and the Muslim League; there is a natural desire, if there is any concession to be got, to get it while the opportunity offers....

The position is thus that, now that the two major political parties have committed themselves, we find ourselves under strong and growing pressure from all sides in the first place for a declaration of our war aims; in the second for some concession. I am not much moved by the demand for declaration of aims, which ought not to present great difficulty. (Incidentally there is, so far as I can trace, no foundation for the Congress suggestion that we have declared that we are in this war to safeguard democracy, a promise on which Jawaharlal has built an argument in which we must avoid allowing ourselves to be entangled).

The demand for some concession or promise of concession as reward for India's cooperation is more important. The fact that specific proposals of Congress and Muslim League cancel out makes it nonetheless real. Congress at any rate shows signs of committing itself to specific and extensive demands to a degree, which may make withdrawal very difficult for its leaders.

The demand varies, because no party has any very clear idea of what to ask for. You will have gathered its general line from the Governor's telegrams. Its various forms (singly or in combination) are independence, or declaration that independence is the ultimate goal; recognition of the 'free

status' of India followed by 'a practical proof'; immediate Dominion Status, promise of Dominion Status or Statute of Westminster Status for India within a whole period, or at the end of the war; reaffirmation of Dominion Status as the ultimate goal; non-official control of the Centre during the war; effective arrangements for association of popular opinion (e.g. Congress and other premiers or important non-officials) with the conduct of the war; assurance that India, if she now responds, can rely on our gratitude when the war is over. Defence (which is the underlying issue of the greatest importance from the point of view of all parties) figures prominently, but the demand is as a rule very generally stated.

Position in this country presents the anomaly that while Congress in effect is asking for an assurance of further concessions on the ground that the Act does not go far enough, the Muslim League wants us to go back on the ground that the Act, so far as they are concerned, has gone too far, and that their interests have been prejudiced in Muslim minority provinces by the absence of adequate safeguards and the failure of Government to use on their behalf such safeguards as the Act contains. It is significant that the Hindus in Bengal and Sind are taking postponement of Federation ill, altogether elsewhere that decision is welcomed, and every endeavour is being made to show that it represents final abandonment.

I have given you about general position as I see it. The alternatives open to us merits consideration. For the pace is becoming a great deal faster than I had anticipated at the beginning of the month; and with the abandonment by Congress and the Muslim League of the unconditional cooperation for which we had reason to hope earlier, and with what is I am satisfied by now the widely spread expectation, consequent on the attitude of Congress and the Muslims, of some gesture as regards the future as the price of cooperation, we enter definitely into a bargaining period in which swift decisions may have to be taken on issues of great importance....

Three main alternatives as I see them are as follows:

- (a) If Congress refuses to cooperate save on terms, which we cannot properly concede, to face the resulting situation, and if necessary allow Congress Ministers to leave office.
- (b) To grant the full price of cooperation at whatever figure the demand may be fixed in terms of an assurance of Dominion Status at the end of the war, or the like.
- (c) To aim at a middle course which would enable us to keep Congress and the Muslim League in line with us, and to secure their cooperation (or at lowest friendly neutrality) while also maintaining the provinces and the scheme of the Act.

We can, I think, rule the second alternative out at once. Guarantees of ultimate independence do not arise. The reconciling of interest of Congress, the Muslim and the Princes in a matter such as Dominion Status or the control of Defence would be a task of the very greatest difficulty. Apart from that there are, I imagine, obvious parliamentary objections and there is the strongest objection to entering into any commitment the implications of which are not realised by all parties, and which there might be the least difficulty in honouring afterwards. Finally, this type of blackmail once started is apt to continue, and you are well aware of the fissures within the Congress itself, and the difficulty of satisfying all parts even of that party.

I now turn to alternative (a). There may be something to be said for this alternative, and we may have to face it. The objections are the bartending effect on our enemies abroad, and possible misunderstandings in the international field; the collapse, even if temporary which it would represent of the policy and progress embodied in the Act; the strain on a somewhat undermanned machine; the probability that our war effort, the value of which in men and materials may well be considerable, would be slowed down; the possible necessity for keeping larger numbers of troops in this country, or under arms, in the vent of serious and successful civil disobedience within a shorter or longer

interval after ministerial resignations; the possible adverse effect on the extent to which we could make reinforcements available for abroad; and finally the undesirability, if it can be avoided, of having the country split by serious divisions at the beginning of a crisis which may well be of long duration. As against this, it would, I think, probably be practicable to carry on in the event of a break with Congress and the resignation of the Ministries. If a break must come, it would probably be less hurtful if it came pretty soon and before our own war effort becomes extensive. We should, so far as I can judge, have the Muslims with us, and we can rely on the Princes. The general sympathy of the country would, I am certain be with the objects for which we are fighting, even if that sympathy was qualified by Congress hostility. We could look for the support of the conservative element though, as our objective would inevitably be to revert to normal constitutional working as soon as possible, that support might be cautious for fear of reprisals if Congress should return to office, Congress Ministers and supporters would, I think, bitterly regret the loss of power and of office.

The possibility that, after a brief period in the wilderness, they would make overtures on a basis which could be accepted consistently with holding to the Act is a thing which cannot be excluded. Finally, were their return at a later stage on the basis of some reassuring statement by me or by you, and without any material concession, to be practicable, we should gain a great deal of time and the prospect of our being able to hold to the scheme of the Act at the end of the war would be greatly enhanced.

There remains the third alternative, to which I myself am disposed to incline. While accepting the possible arguments for the alternative discussed in preceding paragraph, I would like to avoid it if practicable, for at best it is to some extent a confession of failure even if it emerges out of the adoption by political parties of an attitude over which we have no control. What I ask myself in these circumstances is what face saving moves I could with your approval consider, and what would be the wise tactics to adopt.

Our objective would as I see, be to hold to the Act, and in the constitutional field, to preserve the substance while making some concession which would not affect the substance, but would give Congress, (and also the Muslims) an excuse for cooperating despite their declarations that they would do so only at a price.

As regards tactics, what I have in mind would be a further early talk with Gandhi and possibly other Congress leaders, following on my conversation with him on 4 September. I could make it quite clear to them that it was out of the question to consider constitutional changes in war time, even if there was any general agreement between Princes, Muslims and Congress as to future constitutional development (as you know I have been wholly uncompromising on the point in any conversations I have had). I would indicate that I was however alive to the general desire for a closer association of non-official opinion with the conduct of the war.... If they did not regard that as meeting their point, and I am well aware that the Congress Working Committee would be quite unsatisfied by any such expedient I could go on to say that was all I had to suggest; I had now to make contact with other parties, but that if Congress had any specific and workable suggestion within the limits, I had indicated I would of course readily within the limits, I had indicated I would of course readily consider it with every sympathy. I might at that stage think it well to let Gandhi know personally that when I had completed my contacts I should be very ready if necessary to call a meeting of representatives of Congress, the Muslims, the Europeans and the Princes, to discuss generally the position.

But in that event I would warn him that I was most reluctant to do this, since it was inevitable that profound differences of opinion, which would do little credit to India in wartime as well as the impossibility of general agreement would reveal themselves. I would hope that the inevitability of

disagreement would lead him to agree as to the disadvantages, but, subject to your views, I would in the country event be prepared to go through with the meeting. I fully accept that it may give rise to suspicion and misunderstanding at home, especially on the part of the diehards, and to exaggerated expectations here. I may, too, be wrong in thinking that it would reveal the impossibility of agreement in a common policy between the parties concerned.

But I am disposed to think the risks worth facing. I feel no doubt that it would bring out clearly (a) the complete *Volte face* of Jinnah and his friends in the light of two years experience of the Muslim position in Congress majority provinces and their apprehensions of Hindu domination; (b) their determination (which I would expect to be shared by the Princes) to resist any scheme which would hand over defence at the Centre to the majority community, and to safeguard the position of the Punjab and the Muslims in regard to recruitment; (c) the hostility of the Princes to any internal democratization and to any advance of an all-India character likely to affect their own position.

I do not for a moment ignore the fact that if such a meeting took place and was unsuccessful, it would be unlikely that we could rely on the Congress to abandon its previous attitude and to cooperate, they would be much more likely to try to fix the blame for the breakdown upon me or upon His Majesty's Government, and relinquish office all the same. But the discussion would have brought out publicly (it is inconceivable that negotiations could be conducted in camera, and without publication of their tenor) if I am not mistaken, the real and fundamental obstacles, not of our making, to any all-India advance of the type demanded by Congress as the price of co-operation.

The type of face-saving concession which I have in view (and which I should myself be prepared to contemplate in any event) is (a) the constitution of a Defence Liaison Committee on the lines which you and I have discussed, to be drawn from both inside and outside the Legislature and to contain representatives of the Princes;

(b) to indicate that I contemplate myself calling periodically meetings throughout the war over which I should myself preside to give confidential information as to the general position and to bring to notice any points of difficulty of a general character arising out of the prosecution of the war....

The possibility that we may be pressed very strongly either now or as war goes on for some modification of the position at the Centre is a real one, but I do not think that we need as yet to consider that and its difficulties parliamentary and practical are only too obvious.

In the foregoing discussion of the general position I have not distinguished between alternatives of a short and a long war. I think that is in the highest degree relevant to the question whether or not we can hope to the scheme of the Act. The difficulty I would imagine at this stage is likely to be considerable if the war is prolonged. A short war of a year or even eighteen months would present a simpler problem I recognise too, that if we could be certain that war would be over, say, within six months from now, we could probably afford to take greater risks in relation to Congress non-cooperation and to be less concerned by resignation of Ministries. But I think it would be short-sighted to make our plans save on the hypothesis of a long war, and it is on that assumption that I have based the suggestion made above....

¹ The Viceroy told Haig on 23 September: 'I am inviting Gandhu, who readily responded, to come and see me probably on Tuesday. I am also asking Jinnah whom I will of course see separately probably on Wednesday or Thursday.' Again, on 25 September, he wrote to Haig: 'It remains to be seen how far my interview with Gandhu regarding which I have telegraphed to you separately, will pass off, but I think it might be quite a good thing if you were to talk quietly and in quite general terms with some of your Ministers about the position as it would exist under Section 93. You may, e.g., think it possible to ask them how far they contemplated the possibility of lasting neutrality on their policy and generally

give them the impression that you have been reflecting on the position as it will be under Section 93 and are ready for it. Little as any of us want to have to face a Section 93 situation and strong as the objections are I think it well to convey a feeling that we are not apprehensive of it if we are driven into it as the result of demands for concession in return for cooperation of such a character as it would be impossible for us to accept.'

57. On Congress Attitude to War

Viceroy to Haig [Tel.: Immediate], 22 September 1939, Haig Papers, Acc. No. 2068, NAI

Private & Personal. Congress attitude. Immediate position is as follows:

War Sub-Committee appear to have instructed Congress Ministers to move resolution in Assemblies protesting against association of India with war without consent of Indian people or consultation with Assembly concerned, adding that British policy in India militates against His Majesty's Government's professions that war was for preservation of democracy, and that Provincial Assemblies cannot offer to cooperate unless principles of democracy are applied to India and her policy is guided by her people. His Majesty's Government are invited to make a clear declaration that they have decided to regard India as an independent nation entitled to frame her own charter of freedom and to accompany this declaration by suitable action in so far as this is possible even in prevailing war conditions. Resolution concludes, 'This Assembly is further of opinion that no war measure or other activity should be undertaken in this Province except with consent or through the medium of Provincial Government'.

2. I have separately had through Munshi and Lumlay statement from Gandhi gist of which is that his own views in regard to unconditional cooperation are not shared by country, and that resolution of Working Committee properly reflects Congress opinion; that since Congress is unable, owing to past experience, to give unconditional cooperation, it will cooperate only if it is able to convince the country that it has in substance achieved its purpose and that therefore there is complete understanding about it between His Majesty's Government and Congress; but that if such understanding exists, there must be corresponding action even during war. Ministries must not be mere registering agencies of measures coming from center. 'Hence there must be some method at the Centre for having Congress representation sufficient to give it a majority'. (I gather that what is in view is a majority of Executive Council). Only constitutional way in which Ministries can declare their position is to obtain necessary authority of their respective legislatures by getting them to adopt this resolution, unless in the meantime they can convince their legislatures that circumstances in relation to understanding and corresponding action at Centre referred to above have come into existence which render resolution unnecessary. If His Majesty's Government are serious in their profession that they are fighting for democracy, they cannot martial moral opinion in their favour except by declaring that India will be a free democratic country at the end of war, and that in the meantime it has taken steps to implement assurance so far as it is practicable under martial conditions. If for some reason British Government take a different view Ministers will find it impossible to function.

3. Gandhi's statement ends: 'this resolution may be kept back for a week if members of war Sub-committee agree', and instructions in this sense have, I understand been sent to Provinces concerned. It goes on to state that it must be clearly understood that before the AICC meets, the Working Committee, which is due to meet on 4th, must have definite material to enable it to give a lead to AICC and country.

4. I am in consultation with Secretary of State on situation as a whole, and I have repeated to him all information which I have received from various provinces. It is clearly out of the question for us to consider undertakings of the nature suggested, or equally to commit ourselves to vague promises of Dominion Status at end of war or the like. There would be no hope of securing

parliament's approval for that, and apart from that we have to consider legitimate claims of, and reactions on, the Princes, the Muslims and parties other than Congress. I am, I need not say fully, alive to importance if there is a break of stating our case in a manner calculated to bring out fully where responsibility for break lies.

5. I should be grateful if you would continue to keep me in touch with any developments by telegram. I assume that you are satisfied you are fully prepared so far as you can foresee at the moment, for an emergency if it arises.

6. Above will show you how general position stands. I fear it is impossible for me in these circumstances to give you any more definite indication of policy, but it is obvious that situation is going to settle itself one way or other in next few days. And I can only suggest you should hold on and do your best to keep things on right lines.

58. On the 'Left' and War

To R.E. Russel, 22 September 1939. Home Poll, File No. 1, Bihar State Archives

It is only partly correct to say that the Left-Wing leaders have decided to follow the lead of Congress. Our information, based on interceptions and other sources, including public statements of Swami Sahajanand and the Forward Block published in the *Searchlight* of 19.9.39, is that they will only follow the lead of Congress if it is decided at the All-India Congress Committee meeting on the 7 October not to cooperate in war measures. Even then the left-wing will go further than the recent Working Committee resolution and implement the previous Haripura resolution on war by active obstruction to war measures.

If, on the other hand, Congress decides to cooperate, the Left-Wing leaders will go their own way on lines which have been indicated in my last two weekly reports and in others of which copies have recently been sent to you. The intervening period between now and the AICC meeting will be spent in intensive underground activity.

The Left-wing leaders, in other words, have decided on active obstruction whatever decision the AICC may come to, so that the postponement of action against them will only give them an opportunity to develop their plans, of which they are likely to take full advantage.

59. 'Our Attitude Towards the War':

The League of Radical Congressmen's Statement

Independent India, 24 September 1939

24 September 1939.

Ever since the danger of an imperialist war became imminent, the Congress has been repeatedly declaring its determination to oppose India being dragged into a conflict with which she is not concerned. But the time having come to act according to that oft-repeated resolution, our leaders have taken up ambiguous attitude which does not give Congressmen throughout the country any definite direction. Since the war was anticipated, a fighting organisation like the Congress should have been ready with a plan of action to be undertaken in pursuance of its oft-repeated resolution. Unfortunately that was not the case; hence the present confusion and the woeful undecidedness on the part of our leaders, which can be only ill concealed by high-sounding, but ambiguous phrases in which the declaration of the Working Committee is couched. We have all along maintained that even the very best of resolutions is worth nothing unless it is accompanied with a plan of action. The Gandhist leadership of the Congress has a plan of its own but it has persistently

refused to submit it for the sanction of the entire Congress. That is a plan of eventual compromise which must necessarily follow from the dogmas which constitute the fundamental principle of Gandhism. Therefore, it was natural for the present leaders of the Congress to keep their own counsels. The so-called leftists on the other hand also did not appreciate the supreme importance of a concrete plan of action, framed far ahead of time, and of organizational preparations with a clear purpose. They talked incessantly about the coming war danger; not knowing from which quarter the danger was coming, and threatened all sorts of spectacular performances when the opportunity came. Today, both find themselves in the same boat, drifting in the uncharted sea of unexpected events.

But the crisis has come not altogether unexpected—at least not for those who are neither deceived by ambiguous phrases, nor satisfied with shouting slogans. No resolution of the Congress commits it irrevocably to a resistance to India's participation in any war. There was a convenient loophole in each resolution, including the latest one passed by the Working Committee in the beginning of August. Indeed, in that resolution the loophole was so large that practically everybody could see it, which virtually cancelled all previous resolutions. That resolution commits the Congress, in so far as it is represented by its present leaders, to cooperate with imperialism in the case of war on certain conditions. Therefore, when the war came, and India, as a part of the British Empire, was automatically involved in it there was only one thing for the Congress leadership to do; it was to formulate the terms of cooperation. In order to realise what the present leadership of the Congress can be expected to do at the present moment consistent with its policy and the so-called principles one must keep in mind the fact that non-co-operation is a thing of the past. Given its present leadership, the Congress cannot think in terms of non-co-operation. Those who have opposed the idea of ever replacing the present leadership with a new one should not cavil at the word cooperation. Let not the so-called Leftists play the Ostrich game. It is more dignified to go with eyes open, than to be led by the nose. The central fact of the situation is that the leaders of the Congress have declared their readiness to support Britain in the present war if India will be allowed to do so as a free nation. Apart from the obvious illusion on the part of those who formulate such a demand it is pertinent to ask them to formulate it in concrete terms.

Assuming that Britain will accept the demand, for the moment she cannot be expected to do more than make a declaration to the effect. Will that satisfy our leaders? Presumably not. On the other hand, again assuming that Britain will readily grant that, no radical change in the political status of India could take place from today to tomorrow. But India is already involved in the war. While our leaders are thinking in terms of the world situation, and talking in terms of a free India, we are being deprived even of the little freedom of Press and speech we ever possessed. As regards the support for the war, that will not wait until our leaders have made up their mind. As a part of the British Empire, India is obliged to give that. Therefore in order to avoid the indignity of the failure or reluctance to act according to the Congress resolution, our leaders should forthwith formulate the conditions of support, according to those resolutions. The Working Committee's statement does not contain any such demands. The only thing it appears to suggest is that imperialism should commit suicide. That is utopian. Barring a whole-sale resistance, which the present leadership of the Congress cannot certainly have in view, given Gandhi's decisive opinion that the country is not prepared for it, and for which no serious preparations have been made, by any other party, what can be attempted under the given conditions, is pre-determined. There must be an interim arrangement. Efforts must be concentrated for securing the best possible terms in that connection. The pseudo-ethical disdain for the 'spirit of bargaining' may be an expression of ill-conceived idealism. But it certainly has no place in political strategy. Just now we cannot have all we want. We do not possess requisite organised power. We cannot have it for asking.

Therefore, let us try to secure the utmost possible so as to occupy some positions of vantage wherefrom we shall be able to fight for all we want. This state of mind is inherent in the present policy of the Congress. Why, then do not our leaders act in a straight-forward way? That would be more dignified as well as practical.

Knowing that the present leaders of the Congress do not favour any serious resistance, and that, by the anxiety to avoid precipitating it, they will ultimately strike a bargain less favourable for the people of India as a whole, we hereby appeal to the Congress rank and file to strive for an interim arrangement of the basis of the immediate introduction of measures suggested by Comrade M.N. Roy in his letter addressed to the President of the Congress on the eve of the meeting of the Working Committee. The measures are:

1. Introduction of adult franchise for the Central as well as Provincial Legislatures; 2. abolition of Upper Chambers; 3. annulment of the Special of Emergency Powers of the Governors or Governor-General; 4. abolition of safeguards, commercial or otherwise; 5. full rights of citizenship for the States' people whose representatives to the Federal Legislature to be elected also by adult franchise; 6. constitutional guarantee for the freedom of Press, speech and association; 7. enlargement of the functions of local self-government to the extent of controlling the police and creation of local militias; 8. immediate new election of the Central Legislature preparatory to the introduction of full responsibility, irrespective of the provisions of the Government of India Act. Pending the making by the Constituent Assembly of the Constitution of the Democratic State of Free India, the present Constitution is to be forthwith amended on the above lines by the newly elected Central Legislature and endorsed by the Provincial Legislative Assembly.

We repeat that nothing less than the enforcement of these minimum demands will place India anywhere near the status which, according to the latest statement of the Congress Working Committee, must be attained before she can be expected to make any voluntary and effective contribution to the fight against fascism....

60. Prospect of a Congress-British Settlement

Haig to Viceroy [Tel.: Immediate], 25 September 1939, Haig Papers, Acc. No. 2068, NAI

Your telegram No. 2063/P dated September 25. I discussed today with Kidwai prospects of a settlement with Congress. I said that if there were no settlement the resulting situation would seem to me not only very unfortunate but even absurd, for they, like us, would be vitally interested in the success of the war and I presumed they would not wish to do anything likely to embarrass its prosecution. It would be against their interests as well as ours. On the other hand if they were not going to oppose the war it was difficult to see why they should quit office or how they can mark their disagreement with us. He said it was precisely on account of such considerations that he was convinced there must be a settlement. He has been in close touch for the last two days with Nehru and he is sure that Nehru feels strongly that India ought to participate in the war. I said the difficulty seemed to lie in the demands that Congress was putting forward, that they seemed to be asking things which the British Government with the best will in the world could not agree to. It could not be expected that His Majesty's Government could make a far-reaching declaration of future policy about India at a moment's notice and in the middle of a war. He said he fully appreciated this and he did not believe that the Congress demands really involved anything of this nature. He was very sanguine that Gandhi when he meets Your Excellency¹ would be able to

propose some acceptable solution. He said that the Premiers of Madras and Bombay were in touch with Gandhi and were using their influence for a settlement.

¹ Writing to the UP Governor, the Viceroy observed in a telegraphic communiqué on 4 October: 'I had a long discussion yesterday with Rajendra Prasad and Nehru. No very marked progress was made, for they reiterated their claims for (a) a full and unambiguous declaration, including a reference to absolute freedom of India after the war, and to right of Indians to elect their form of Government through a constituent assembly; (b) some immediate practical application of the principle involved in the declaration by way of sharing of power at the center.

I endeavoured to indicate certain of the difficulties in the position and told them that I must take time to consider the matter further and to make further contacts with other representative persons. I have today heard from R. Prasad that while Working Committee are adhering to their original time-table for meetings of Working Committee and AICC which had been notified some time ago "it India nor our intention to hurry things considering the grave issues involved, and we shall advise the All India Congress Committee not to take any final decisions". The Viceroy added: 'I Continue to be not altogether optimist as to prospects of reaching any agreement, but trust that my doubts may be ill-founded. Rajendra Prasad, for your own information, struck me as being reasonably open-minded, but Nehru left the impression of having made up his mind in advance on a somewhat academic and theoretical basis, and I suspect that our chief difficulty is likely to be in connection with his rigidity of outlook.'

61. Nationalist Muslims and the War

In response to the invitation of the Azad Muslim Conference, the Nationalist Muslims of the Punjab held a meeting at the residence of Sheikh Siraj-ud-Din Piracha to review the international situation. Maulana Mohammed Hanif Nadvi presided. *Hindustan Times*, 25 September 1939

25 September 1939

The meeting adopted a resolution endorsing the Congress Working Committee's statement on the international situation vis-à-vis the Congress. It also made it clear that it is necessary that the British Government should declare its war aims.

As regards the resolution of the Working Committee of the Muslim League passed at its Delhi meeting, the nationalist Muslim consider it 'detrimental to the national cause and positively harmful to the advancement of the Muslim self-respect and honour, and undermining the spirit of self-reliance of the Muslims, because the resolution demands active interference of the Governors for safeguarding their religious, cultural and political rights. In our opinion, these rights can be, and will be safeguarded only by the efforts of the Muslim themselves'.

One of the conditions on the realisation of which the Working Committee of the Muslim League has promised to give support to the British Government is that the latter should recognise the Muslim League as the only representative body of the Muslims of India. But at the time of Working Committee of the Muslim League has altogether ignored the real political and economical demands of the Muslim masses and the problem of national independence. The meeting of the Muslim Nationalists of the province considers this action of the Working Committee of the Muslim League to be against the interests of the Muslim and contrary to the standpoint of the Islamic World. It is a clear attempt on the part of the Muslim League to divert the attention of the Indian Muslims and the British Government from the real issues which we are today confronting our country.

Taking into consideration that the resolution of the Muslim League represents the views of the reactionary and narrow circle, the meeting of the Nationalist Muslims deems it necessary that an All-India Muslims Convention should be held, representing the views of the entire Muslim community for chalking out a concrete plan of action.

The meeting appointed Maulana Abdul Majid Atiqi to correspond with various Muslim leaders for convening the convention at the earliest possible date.

62. Socialists and War

The Socialists gathered in Patna on 26 September to discuss the war situation. Among those present at the meeting were Jayaprakash Narayan, Swami Sahajanand and Faridul Haq Ansari. Home Department File No. 1, 1939, Bihar State Archives, Patna

26 September 1939

Jayaprakash Narayan told his audience that had Great Britain to fight for democracy, she would not have nurtured the trees of Nazism and Fascism with the blood of Abyssinia and Spain. Fascism and Nazism should have been nipped in the bud. There was an upheaval in international politics. There are democracies in England and France but there was capitalism in them. They were the homes of imperialism. Chamberlain was fighting against Hitler not because he did not agree with his principles. The capitalist countries feared when power was in the hands of the kisans and mazdoors. Every imperialist country had two policies—long-range policy and the short-range policy. In the short range it was their duty to see that the countries like Germany and Italy should not attack their imperialism and there should be no interference with their exploitation of the world. Under the long-range policy they had to see that such powers should not be established in the world which ruin capitalism. It was absurd to say that they were out to end Hitlerism. There was not a single man so powerful as is the Viceroy of India. Hitler was responsible to his industrialists, army and public opinion. He could not continue for a single minute if he could not carry his people with him. The Viceroy had no anxiety.

4-5 years ago when Italy invaded Abyssinia, the British Government could have closed Suez Canal and everything would have been settled. They could have imposed oil sanction which would have stopped their aeroplanes, but they did not want that Italy should have been ruined, had it been so. Red Italy would have emerged in its place. Spain was raided with the help of the German and Italian forces, but the saviours of today's democracy were the silent spectators. The Spanish democracy was not allowed to flourish as there was Soviet Russia in the eastern side of Europe and Socialist Spain would have been in the west, thus there was a danger of Red revolution. They did not care for the safety of the real democracy. Chamberlain followed the appeasement policy. When there was danger that Hitler might challenge their might and there was the question who should dominate Europe, there was no other course left open for England but to join the war. When Napoleon was at his height in France and the prestige of the English was affected, they finished him.... When the Kaiser challenged their domination and the result was that the British Empire grew in size. More countries of the world were being enslaved, but the exploitation of the world did not cease. Let not India be deceived. It was nothing but a quarrel of imperialism. He need not tell them how many countries were made slaves just to keep India under subjugation. Had India been freed other half a dozen countries would have been freed viz. Egypt, Palestine, Persia and Afghanistan. The latter two were half free. If Great Britain was fighting for democracy then it should first free India. There were imperial forces on both sides and he had placed an analysis of the whole situation before them. India was very anxious for the democracy of the whole world as if she had taken a contract to free all the countries of the world. If England was defeated then Hitler would advance and Chamberlain was better than Hitler, that was the argument advancement. His plain reply was that if England wanted the help of India to defeat Hitler, then she must have the willing support of India which is full of man power, minerals and other foodstuffs, then it was her first duty to free India....

The speaker added that India would be free on her own legs and if she had strength, she would defeat the English as well as the Japanese to remain free. If India had no strength where was the difference if they were slaves to Germans or the English. Such kind of propaganda was done in those days. It was a pity that their tongues were restrained in some meanings and the Press was very much terrified. He had taken their much time but he had placed everything before them which was as clear as a mirror. There was no room left for any suspicion....

In conclusion, he said that the history of India was an old one. He was glad to read the stories of their forefathers both Hindus and Muslims. A time for their test had arrived. They should act in such a manner that their next generation might be proud to read their accounts in history. He hoped that they would not fail at the time of their test. There was continued clapping and shouts of *Inqilab Zindabad*.

63. India and the War

A.S.K. Iyengar to Rajagopalachari, 26 September 1939. Tamil Nadu State Archives, Public (General Dept.), 1939

Yesterday I sent you a copy of the order served on me by the Commissioner of Police, Madras, along with my reply to the same.

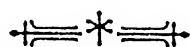
I am sure the reporters' version of my speeches are before you. You will please find from a perusal of those speeches that I have only attempted to explain the Working Committee's statement on war, vis-à-vis the Congress resolutions on the same subject. I am firmly convinced that an order of the type that has been served on me is clearly an attack on civil liberties. It is a matter of surprise to me that Congress propaganda is not permitted to be carried on even in a province where there is a Congress Ministry in office.

I am sure the Police Commissioner issued this order on his own. I, and a number of my friends, had often brought it to your notice the inherent contradiction between the police and the popular Ministry, but unfortunately we were not able to convince you. Police excesses of late has been so much in evidence, that there is a very common belief that the Police portfolio is not in the hands of the Congress Ministry. I know this is a wrong belief, but how can one muzzle public opinion?

I would only like you to appreciate the stand I and my friends are taking in respect to the War, in which Britain is today engaged. We hold it is an imperialist war, i.e., it is a war for the redistribution of colonial exploitation. We hold that any help given by India to Britain in the present war will only strengthen the chains of slavery, and we, therefore, believe, in accordance with the Congress resolutions on War, that India shall have nothing to do with it.

If exposition of the Congress case for non-cooperation with the present imperialist war invites such orders, as the one served on me by the Police Commissioner, I am afraid the time has come when the Ministry should publicly disown such individual actions on the part of subordinate officers, and accordingly take prompt action against them. It will be otherwise tantamount to acquiescing in what they do.

May I request you to kindly let me know what your views are in regard to the points that I have raised in this letter?



64. Congress and War: Working Committee's Statement

Article by Chhotu Ram¹, *Leader*, 27 September 1939

27 September 1939

As an abstract exposition of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru's national and international idealism the Congress Working Committee's statement of which Nehru is undoubted author leaves nothing to be desired. As a counterblast to Bose's recent militant propaganda also the statement has a distinct political value. But it must be admitted that it contributes little—except perhaps in the wrong direction—to a ready solution of the concrete problem with which India is confronted today. Does Nehru, or for that matter the Working Committee, really, believe that dilating upon the past or present grievances of India or instances of departure from the path of the full-blooded democracy on the part of Britain or striking a note of hesitancy at a time when the fundamental principles of democracy and freedom are being threatened with extinction, promotes the cause of democracy or freedom? On the other hand will not the dubious attitude of the premier political organisation of India as disclosed in this statement encourage in Germany a belief that, in consequence of the embarrassment caused by the hostile attitude of a powerful political body in India, Great Britain will not be able to prosecute the war with the singlemindedness of purpose which is essential for achieving ultimate success, and will not that belief strengthen the determination of Nazism to exterminate, once and for all, democracy as a political institution?

Further, does not the present attitude of the Working Committee fall short of that high standard of Indian chivalry and generosity which refused to take advantage of the difficulties of one's adversary? Lastly, is not Mr Nehru conscious of a glaring divergence between the statements issued by the Working Committee and the sentiments to which he himself gave expression at Rangoon on his return from China? Where not the views expressed in formal public statements by Mahatma Gandhi, Bapu, Rajendra Prasad, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and Sir Wazir Hasan among Congressmen and a host of other progressive public men including Dr Tagore, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and Sir Radhakrishnan, unequivocally opposed to a spirit of bargaining being allowed to taint the attitude of the Congress? These are all questions which do not seem to have received adequate consideration in the face of the threat of revolt on the part of the left wing. Outsiders, at any rate, will not find it easy to believe that the voice of the Congress elders has ceased so completely to have weight and influence with the rank and file.

The statement of the Working Committee reveals a lurking suspicion in the mind working behind it that even the present war is being waged by Great Britain with imperialist designs and for imperialist ends. There is no warrant for such a suspicion. The present war has been thrust on a very unwilling British Government whose anxiety to avert it by all honourable means was generally regarded as definitely bordering on cowardice. Great Britain has, to the knowledge of everybody, been driven in to this war by the perverse stubbornness of Herr Hitler who refused to agree to any device but the device of brute force for the solution of his dispute with Poland. It will be nothing short of an outrage upon language to call a war undertaken in such circumstances an imperialist war. But even if it were conceded as the statement contends that the present war is, in essence if not in form, imperialistic, would the offer or grant to India of a *quid pro quo* for her cooperation divest it of its essential character?

There is in the statement a twitting reference to Britain's inconsistency in asking India to 'associate herself in a war said to be for democratic freedom when that very freedom is denied to her'. There is justification in this reference. But there is even more painful incongruity between the official attitudes of the Congress as revealed in the statement and its insistent reference to Britain's failure to come to the rescue of Abyssinia, Czechoslovakia and Spain when democracy

and freedom were being strangled there. Now that Britain has come out resolutely on the side of democracy struggling heroically in Poland why is the Congress wavering in the discharge of its clear duty? What are professed sympathy, expressions of admiration and messages of hope and goodwill on the part of the Congress worth if that august body, speaking in the name of India, insists on its proverbial pound of flesh before that sympathy and goodwill are translated into action.

Let there be a little clear thinking and calm reflection. Are we sure that the open advocacy by certain leading Congressmen of the political propriety of exploiting the European situation to India's advantage did to contribute, in some small measure, to the precipitation of the present international crisis? Will not the present sulking attitude of the Congress, with its undue emphasis on past grievances and present disabilities, hearten the foes and dishearten the friends of democracy? Suppose Great Britain, as a result of the lukewarmness or hostility of Indian champions of freedom administration democracy, decides to grasp the hand of friendship which Herr Hitler so eagerly extended in his last message to Mr Chamberlain and to conclude a peace regardless of its ultimate repercussions, will that peace further the cause of democracy and freedom? Again, suppose Great Britain and France succeed in winning a victory in spite of the Congress's refusal to contribute to that end will that contingency add to the political stature of 'India's Parliament' or strengthen India's moral claim to political emancipation? Lastly, suppose Great Britain and France succumb before the forces of Nazism and Fascism, will that dreadful event and imperialism or prove helpful in the evolution of that new world order which will ensure 'real democracy for all the people of all countries and a world freed from the nightmare of violence and imperialist oppression'.

India will also do well to free her mind of the illusion that she will be able to gain freedom as a result of the chaos and confusion which will accompany or follow the fall of Great Britain. India's freedom would not be worth a day's purchase if Great Britain fell. Great Britain's disappearance from the scene can only result in new, more grasping and more ruthless usurpers establishing political sway here.

The Congress Working Committee also 'earnestly appeal to the Indian people to end all internal conflict and controversy and in this grave hour of peril to keep in readiness and hold together as a united nation... to achieve the freedom of India within the larger freedom of the world'. The appeal is as earnest as it is well timed. But will not the committee pause to consider that it is as important to hush the voice of controversy and cavil raised by them vis-à-vis Great Britain as it is to hush it among the various component parts of the Indian community *inter se*? The domination and exploitation of one class by another in the in the same country is morally as wrong as the domination and exploitation of one country by another, and if, in the face of a grave crisis in the history of a subject country, it is right, as it undoubtedly is, to hush the voice of all controversy and conflict as between class and class, party and party and group and group it is equally right to hush that voice between one country and another which, for better or for worse, have, by the march of past events of history, been brought into the same policy, the reason being that that is the only way in which the freedom of each can be guaranteed and the bounds of freedom of themselves of the world can be enlarged.

Now for the aims and objectives which underlie Great Britain's intentions in the undertaking of the present war. These aims and objectives have been repeatedly announced by Great Britain's responsible statesmen. A fresh repetition will not add to their force or validity. No declaration has, however, been made as to Britain's intention with regard to placing India, in the immediate or near future, on a footing of equality with other self-governing members of the British Commonwealth of nations. Shall we insist on such a declaration as a prerequisite of our cooperation and support? The best traditions of Indian culture and Mahatma Gandhi's cult of *ahimsa* give an answer in the

negative. In this connection the Punjab Premier has given a lead which is at once nobler and more in consonance with the spirit of Eastern civilization, and has the firm and solid support of the province behind it. But the material minded West cannot take a reasonable exception to this demand. Again, whether such a declaration is made now or later in the course of the war, the compelling moral force of India's whole-hearted cooperation may be confidently counted upon to result in this consummation sooner or later. The path of wisdom, however, in the present day world which, despite its professions of a sublime idealism, is dominated by materialism would seem to be, that, in order to allay suspicion and distrust, Great Britain should make such a declaration without any avoidable delay and, as an earnest of its good faith, should set up a board of advisers drawn from all important political groups to guide the policy of the Central Indian executive in the prosecution of the war and to manship rise to the occasion? Let influence the course of general administration. Will British statuses hope that it will.

¹ Rao Bahadur Chaudhri Chhotu Ram (1882-1945); educated St. Stephen's Mission High School and College in Delhi (graduated in 1905) and Law College, Agra; assistant private secretary to Raja of Oudh, 1905; teacher in the Rang Mahal High School, Lahore, before joining the Law College, Agra; practiced at Agra and later at Rohtak; editor, *Jat Gazette* (1916-24); joined Congress in 1916 (President, Rohtak District Congress Committee, 1917-20) and resigned from it in 1921 over Gandhi's policy of non-cooperation; member, Punjab, legislative council (1921-45); founder-member of Fazl-i Hussain's National Unionist Party, Punjab, 1923, and since remained a staunch champion of Unionism (Leader of the Party, 1926-36), knighted in 1937, minister, Punjab Government, 1925 and from 1937 to his death on 9 January 1945.

6.5. Viceroy's Interview with Gandhi

Viceroy to Secretary of State (Tel.), 27 September 1939, Linlithgow Papers, Acc. No. 2335, NAI

I saw Gandhi last evening for 3.15 hours. On the conclusion of the interview he returned to Wardha. The discussion, main points of which I report below, was most friendly, but I was I confess left with a very definite impression at the end of that we may find it very difficult to avoid break, and that the Right-Wing are somewhat doubtful of their own capacity in the event of their reaching any agreement with us as to cooperate to deliver the goods.

Gandhi in the first place gave a detailed account of the background of the Wardha discussions and explained that had he been 10 or 15 years younger, he would probably have taken the responsibility for the drafting of the resolution himself, in which event it might have emerged in a very different form; but that he felt the burden more than he could carry by himself at his present age, that he had therefore felt bound to take Nehru. Rajendra Prasad, who had been present at the discussions, had indicated that while himself entirely sympathizing with the complete non-violence theory, there was no chance of the Congress public accepting that theory at the present time. Abul Kalam Azad had given Gandhi a hundred per cent support throughout, and it was Abul Kalam's reluctance to acquiesce in Gandhi's abstention from the handling of the resolution which had been responsible for the long delays in reaching a decision. Proposal for Congress War Cabinet had then been made by Gandhi himself and accepted; but War cabinet consisting of Nehru, Vallabhbhai Patel and Abul Kalam had asked that they should be subject in all major decisions to views of Gandhi and Prasad.

Substantially his demands to me were for (a) a satisfying declaration; (b) some action at the Centre. He was somewhat obscure as to the terms of any declaration. He urged that it should be as ample as possible; and that if we followed our own example in dealing with South Africa after the Boer War and left India free to frame her own constitution so long as the elements concerned

could agree among themselves, we should be generally rewarded for our confidence and our political sense. Declaration was the essential thing round which discussion centered more than anything else. From the point of view of the Working Committee it was vital that they should have something with which to satisfy their public and clearly the fuller the better.

As regards the Centre, he admitted that he had not yet cleared his own mind as to what sort of arrangement, he wished for. What was needed was a sharing of responsibility with my Government. He thought there was a case for some sort of representative body to the advise and suggestions of which we should undertake, in the spirit of whatever declaration we may make, to pay the fullest deference in reaching decisions.

He urged very strongly the case regarding Congress as the only political party in this country which really mattered in these affairs, particularly where nationalist sentiment was concerned (I made it clear to him that you and I could not accept that view, or disregard the legitimate claims and interests of other parties, and particularly the Muslims and the Princes).

As regards a declaration, we did to get down to any very precise detail. I emphasized the difficulties that confront us, and the impossibility of anything involving legislation in present conditions. I emphasized also the lack of agreement between the various parties affected, and the extreme seriousness and gravity of the communal issue. My own idea of a declaration, I told him, would be to avoid in it any mention of differences between communities or quoting these differences as reason for proceeding with caution in pledging ourselves as what to do or not to do at the end of the war. It was just possible that His Majesty's Government might be able to go so far as to say, that they would at the end of the war reconsider the position under the Act. It might even be found possible to add that agreement between communities when the time came to re-examine the position might be held to be a condition of future constitutional advance.

Gandhi indicated that a declaration on these general lines might create many difficulties and he bagged for something full and satisfying which would stand for all time and which would give Congress something, which they could hope to elaborate as giving real and substantial ground for hope to India as regards fulfillment of her aspirations. While he made it very clear that declaration was the essential thing to which everything else fell to be related. I did not encourage him to hope that we could go any material distance to meet him over it.

As regards the Centre, I again explained to him the extreme difficulty of combining a system of Cabinet with a system of departmental government or of substituting for my present Council in whole or in part a body of active politicians and I told him that I could not hold out any hope to him a *Kuccha* Centre during the War. I sounded him as to various possible methods of associating public opinion with the conduct of the war which we have had in mind, viz., (a) broad based Consultative Committees (b) Committee of Central Legislative; (c) Discussions between the Governor-General and Congress as Premiers plus representative of the Princes.

He was strongly averse to a broad-based consultative Committee. Personnel would present difficulty it would require most careful management and handling, and, unless we are very fortunate, would tend to degenerate into a communal wrangle. If there was therefore to be any committee or other body to represent public opinion in connection with the conduct of war, he thought that it should be a committee of the Legislature. The Legislature was already organised on a communal basis, its members knew one another, and wounds inflicted would be less deep. He did not suggest or refer to a reconstitution or re-election of the present Legislature.

He was averse from a conference as between the Governor-General and Premiers until the declaration had been made. When that had been made and had given satisfaction, there would be no harm in my summoning Premiers once and talking to them in general terms about the conduct of the war or the like.

I hinted to him the possibility of an All-parties Conference, emphasizing the probability of disagreement, the detrimental effect on Indian prestige, and the risk that the fissures which its meetings would reveal might exacerbate communal bitterness. My own object, I said, had been so far as possible to keep the communal differences in the background and to try to get India together as a whole. Gandhi expressed the utmost reluctance to contemplate an All-Parties Conference which ought, he thought, to be avoided at almost any price because of the dissensions it would reveal and the impossibility of agreement.

Finally I indicated to him that it was impossible for me to do business of this nature, particularly in war time under short notice ultimate. I looked to him to do what he could to help in this regard. To that he readily agreed. I told him that I thought it would be a good thing for me to make contact without delay with Rajendra Prasad and Nehru. He entirely agreed and suggested that I should see them on 3 October at Delhi. He thought it desirable that he and Abul Kalam Azad should be present on that occasion. I have telegraphed today to Rajendra Prasad and Nehru to invite them accordingly.

It is difficult to judge at this stage how much trouble we may anticipate should my further conversations with Prasad and Nehru etc., produce no result. It is of the utmost importance that responsibility for the break, if there is one, should be properly located, and that it should be clear to everyone that a break has come because of demands by one Indian party which cannot be granted consistently with the legitimate interests of other Indian parties. For that purpose I think it may well be necessary for us to contemplate an All-Parties Conference, or at any rate invitations for one, even if Congress refuse to accept, with a view to putting ourselves right with public opinion generally, though we shall have to take full account, if we decide on such a Conference later, of the risk that contrary to expectation it may confront us with agreed demands, of an embarrassing nature....

66. T.B. Sapru to K.N. Haksar, 28 September 1939

Sapru Papers (2) (Microfilm), NMML

My dear Haksar,

Many thanks for your letter of the 21st of September. I have already written to you two letters—one from Simla and the other a very long letter which I sent by registered post. They must be in your hands before this letter reaches you....

As regards the situation there is no doubt that there has been some trouble in Afghanistan and there may be more. This is Amanullah's opportunity. He is believed to be already in Russia.

The British are trying to find out what Russia's attitude towards British Empire will be and if they come to the conclusion that it is unsatisfactory or threatening trouble may arise between them and Russia in which case Kashmir and the Punjab will stand in great danger.

What Russia has done to Poland and other parts of Europe on this occasion must have caused alarm to Germany but the latter has got to put a good face on it. There is no doubt that there is much internal discontent in Germany but whether it will materialize no one can say. I do not attach any importance to these so-called pacts between Germany and Russia or Japan and Russia. They are like marriages of convenience.

As regards Italy you have used the very phrase which I heard at Simla. It is held in certain quarters that the Italian cat may still jump on the British side.

As regards the internal situation and the hopes of the Congress for a declaration it is difficult to say what may happen. No doubt the rightists want a declaration, perhaps as one man has written to me to save their face but it is quite clear that Jinnah and the Muslim League are adamant. They

will have no changes at the Centre without reference to them and without their interests being effectively protected. It would be foolish on the part of anybody to be dogmatic as to what may or may not happen under the pressure of political exigencies. Supposing, however, a declaration is made and even Dominion Status is promised is that going to satisfy the Congress or Muslim League or the Indian States unless that details of the Constitution are known and the question of mutual relations is settled. As regards the declaration do not forget that the declaration of 1917 was made after the Congress-Muslim pact was arrived at in the Congress of Lucknow in 1916. Are conditions today the same as in 1916? We are, however, so much more divided and more distrustful of each other than at any time in our history.

As regards J.L. he is in his heart of hearts over fond of the Russian model and finds it difficult to combine statesmanship with his revolution mentality. The Muslim cannot bear to hear his name. So bitter they are against him.

It would be quite interesting to know what has passed between the Viceroy and the Mahatma yesterday. I can imagine the sort of conversation which must have taken place but I cannot be sure. The fact that the Mahatma left Simla the same evening is somewhat significant. It is susceptible of two interpretations. He might have gone back satisfied and have been in a hurry to go and convey the happy message to the High Command. Alternatively, he might have been very disappointed. All this is speculation.

¹ Amanullah, the King of Afghanistan (1926-29) was trying to make use of this opportunity to stage a coup.

67. The World War and the Congress

Kranti (Hindi Weekly), September 1939

September 1939

Though the Congress has made its policy towards the World War quite clear, so far no concrete programme had been set before the country by which the people would know what is to be done in case the government refuses the Congress demand or the form of our future struggle. Nowhere have we prepared a war-like atmosphere. All eyes had been trained on the All India Congress Committee but it has met and no decision of any importance was taken. The demand for complete freedom was reiterated. The British Government has been given yet another opportunity to consider the matter carefully. Such repeated accommodations are leading to the feeling in the country that possibly a working agreement has been arrived at by the Congress and the British Government. Instead of battle, the atmosphere in the country is one of compromise.

We should take care that we do not keep harping on peace, allowing the government time to turn around and reject our demands. In that event, we will be forced to launch a national struggle against the British Government, whether we are prepared or not. A struggle in such conditions of despair is bound to fail. Therefore, if we are really in favour of freeing India through a struggle, we should start preparing for satyagraha. There should be a nation-wide propaganda as to when the satyagraha is to begin. The workers and peasants must be prepared to face general strikes and stoppage of payment of revenue, respectively. The initiative to seize the initiative must rest with the Congress and not the government. Can we expect the Congress leaders to give up their policy of vacillation and give the call for battle? This is a golden opportunity to win back India's lost freedom. If we let it slip by, another will not come our way for a long, long time.

Socialists, communists and other extremist Congressmen should not fritter away the opportunity by simply criticizing the Congress leaders. Why do you sit idle? Why don't you do something?

Why don't you reach out to the peasants and workers and prepare them for the impending struggle? Remember that the responsibility for freeing the country rests, equally, with us as with Congress, leaders. The time has now passed when the main preoccupation of the extremists was to criticize the moderates and expose their methods. Today, the extremists are a force to reason with and should realise that the responsibility for making the movement successful is equally theirs. In fact, their responsibility is greater, because it is our claim that the extremists are in the forefront of the war of independence.

68. War-Crisis and Our Tasks

Editorial, *New Age*, Vol. 6, No. 4, September 1939

September 1939

[Extracts]

... The policy of Imperialism is clear. It is determined to tighten its grips over India for mobilizing India's resources of men and money, for maintaining 'internal peace' in the country in times of war. During the last six months important war measures have been taken in this direction: The anti-recruitment Bill, the 'War' amendment to the Government of India Act, and the hastening of the federation by alternatively cajoling and coercing the princes. Imperialism wants that the Congress ministries cooperate with them in the task of war preparations and in suppressing popular discontent and revolt that may arise during the war. Their game is to utilize the war situation to split the forces of national struggle, to defeat them simply and then impose upon the people the fetters of the Federal Scheme. In the recent war crisis, the imperialist newspapers like the *Times of India* and the *Statesman* urge Congress Ministries and the Congress High Command to come away from the policy of non-cooperation with war measures. They condemn the Socialists, Communists, as well as Bose for their demand for an effective policy of war-resistance and for an immediate nation-wide struggle.

In the grave emergency that has arisen two alternatives are sharply posed before the nation. Will our National leadership implement the Congress's policy of opposing fascism and war, will it unify all the forces of the people's struggle for an effective campaign of war-resistance and for independence? The time has now come when the struggle against war has become one with the fight against the hated Federation. India's vassalage to Britain, the reactionary and autocratic character of the new Federal center, would be thrown into sharp relief in the emergency war measures to which our country is being subjected. An effective movement against war, in which the ministerial action is supported by mass action cannot but be at the same time a nation-wide protest movement against the Government of India Act itself.

The other alternative would be conditional cooperation with imperialism or mere resignation and neutrality. In both the cases, there would be no mass action to resist war. In these cases, imperialism would strike mercilessly against forces of unrest and mass discontent. Drastic actions would be taken against Socialists, Communists, Kisan Sabha workers and radical Congressmen under the guise that they are endangering peace. Defence of India Act would be promulgated by the Viceroy. Some All-India action is being contemplated to suppress the growing resistance of workers all over the country against the mill-owners' offensive of wage-cuts and victimization. The position of neutrality or passivity would give imperialism the best opportunity to divide our forces and defeat them singly.

If we examine the resolution which the Working Committee passed on the issue of war in its last session at Wardha we would find that on the face of it, it is not inconsistent with the first

alternative. The resolution condemns the policy of Chamberlain and fascist aggression. It fraternizes with the people who stand for democracy and freedom, but states that it is unable to associate with the movement for democratic freedom which is denied to India. Congress declares its determination to oppose all attempts to impose a war on India. As a protest against the dispatch of Indian troops without consulting the Assembly, the Working Committee called upon, 'all Congress members of the Central Legislative Assembly to refrain from attending the next session. It further reminded the Provincial Government to assist in no way the war preparations of the British Government and to keep in mind the policy laid down by the Congress to which they must adhere. If the carrying out of this policy leads to the resignations or removal of the Congress Ministers they must be prepared for this emergency.

This resolution, which was passed some time before the war situation, became critical can be something more than a 'fighting gesture'. It calls upon the Provincial Ministries to implement the anti-war policy of the Congress and face dismissal in doing so. It characterizes the decision of the Congress MLAs not to attend the present session of the Central Assembly as a 'first step'.... But what next? The Working Committee is to meet in Patna to chalk out the complete line of the Congress if war breaks out.

Will it be a line of fight or will it be a line of neutrality? In the imperialist quarters, hope is being entertained that some *via media* will still be found. Inspired Simla messages for some time spread the rumour that the Congress members of the Central Legislature would attend the session later. It was suggested that the Viceroy would make an appeal to the national leaders asking for cooperation and assuring consultation with the Party leaders. The *Statesman* of Calcutta went to the length of suggesting an immediate formation of a coalition federal cabinet with the representatives of the Congress, Muslim League and the States. Even the London press was looking for a statement from Gandhiji which would clarify India's position vis-à-vis war.

What is the basis of this expectation in imperialist circles? The clue is to be found in the other resolutions of the Working Committee. This same session passed the resolution expelling Bose from all elective posts in the Congress. It hinted that the PCC's deal with the other 'rebels' in the same way. It had indicated its disapproval of the hunger-strike of the Bengal politicals while demanding their speedy release. Since they compelled Sjt Bose to resign and formed their 'homogeneous' leadership had not its heart on getting a 'homogeneous' Congress. In the Bombay session, they got the Constitutional amendments passed which will have the effect of forcing out the leftists, especially Socialists and Communists. By banning individual satyagraha taken without the sanction of the PCC and by taking away the right of the PCCs to criticize the work of the Ministries publicly, they put an effective check on the extra-parliamentary activities, they rendered the PCCs subservient tools of the Ministries. Finally, they have begun a campaign of expelling Congressmen who dared to raise their voice or exercise their democratic right to mobilize Congress opinion against these resolutions in order to get them rescinded. This campaign of weeding the Left is now reaching absurd limits. In Andhra, Congressmen are being threatened with expulsion even if they participate in the welcome to Bose. The fighting gesture against war is thus accompanied by a purge against the militants in the Congress, mostly such as are prominently connected with the labour and kisan movement in the country.

Is there any wonder if the enemy did not take our resolution seriously and expects a watering down of the same? Those who want a fight do not begin the preparation by exterminating a part of the fighting forces. Not only is the Congress machinery used to this purpose, but the Ministries continue to carry on their repressive actions against Labour and Kisan movements in Bihar, Madras, CP and Bombay. The latest and the most glaring attack is against the textile workers of Bombay, where the Ministry has arrested the whole executive of the Bombay Girni Kamgar Union on

trumped up charges of 'incitement to violence, criminal intimidation, etc.' The purpose is obviously to smash the Communist-led militant union, which is just about to complete its 40,000 membership drive and to win recognition under the Trade Disputes Act. The attack against textile labour is universal. In Madras, Bombay, UP, and in CP, the owners are determined to curtail production, cut wages and throw out thousands of workmen. The owners want to crush the united counter-offensive of the workers, want to cancel even the few benefits which the Congress Ministries gave them. Now the Ministries are assisting the owners in their nefarious object by this sort of repression. In the name of 'creating non-violent atmosphere', the arm of law and police is being used against workers and peasants' awakening, which in reality should be a source of strength to the Congress. Is it any wonder, if after all this, imperialism is septic about the fighting gesture materializing?

There is another reason which could give hope to imperialism in this direction. In a recent issue of the *Harijan*, Gandhiji discloses that he also submitted a draft to the Working Committee on the issue of war crisis. Gandhiji's draft was rejected in favour of the one adopted, which was drawn up by Nehru. Gandhiji characterised this as his defeat. The exact nature of Gandhiji's proposals are not known. He himself characterised them as 'out and out non-violent.' Besides, his views, that 'India should not exploit the war situation to win independence,' are well-known. One can easily guess what Gandhiji's line on the war would be—'neutrality and non-resistance to war-preparations.' The fact that Gandhiji does not approve of the attitude adopted by the Working Committee, cannot but raise hopes in the hearts of the enemy. It would not take long to convert Gandhiji's defeat once again to Victory!

There is a great danger that the Anti-War line adopted by the Working Committee would be imperceptibly transferred into the line of neutrality and Non-resistance purpose by Gandhiji. If resignation and dismissal is not accompanied by mass-resistance to war measures, the result would be neutrality. This would embolden imperialists to intensify the offensive against a section of the National Movement—especially the Labour and Kissan movements. The consequence would be disruption of our forces and defeat. Gandhiji's line—of neutrality and war resistance in the case of war—is the logical conclusion of his whole line which he has been advocating in the *Harijan* and which becomes the practice of the Working Committee in spite of the resolutions of the Congress.

At present two political lines are contending for supremacy. The one is the line which found its, more or less adequate expression, in Nehru's presidential addresses at Lucknow and Faizpur—and in the election manifesto, the Lucknow and Faizpur resolutions on civil liberties, Labour and agrarian programme and on war and foreign policy. This line recognizes the emergence of the new mass force, the organisation and the struggle of the workers and peasants—a new mass technique of struggle—and the need to shape the Congress anew as the instrument of the United Front struggle, in which the organised workers and peasants play an important role. The emergence of this line in the Congress is itself the reflex of the new upsurge of workers' and peasants' struggle and organisation. Since 1934 and the rise of the working class and Socialism as a political force. We had reached a new stage in our National Struggle in which the working class comes forward as a political force broadening and unifying the national struggle and raising it to a higher level. The policy of strengthening workers' and peasants' organisations. Their unity with the Congress for the struggle for independence and democracy, the unity of extra-parliamentary struggle with the work of the Ministries, the unity of State's people's Struggle with that of the general struggle for National freedom, the unity with Communal minorities by guaranteeing to them all their minority rights and by drawing them in the joint struggle for National and democratic freedom, and finally the preparation for a nation wide struggle—this is the policy which logically arises from the Lucknow. Faizpur line, this is the truly National line of unity and advance which Socialists and Communists fight for.

As opposed to this, stands the *Harijan's* line which is sought to be imposed upon the Congress from without. This line is based on the oft quoted Dictum of Gandhiji that Swaraj can be won in the present period, through the experiment of office acceptance, 'avoiding violent revolution on the one hand and Mass Civil Disobedience on the other'. For Gandhiji there is no extra-parliamentary work except 'the constructive programme' viz. Khaddar, Gramodyog, and Harijan uplift. He looks with suspicion at the rise of the Labour and peasant movements. 'The kind of training that labour generally receives today leaves it in ignorance, and it relies upon violence as the ultimate sanction. Thus it is not possible for me to regard the present and labour activity as a new programme of satyagraha' (*Harijan*, July 29, 1939). He wants non-violent atmosphere for the success of this 'Office acceptance' experiment. He is prepared to allow the 'minimum violence' of the Congress Ministries against the workers and peasants. He is definitely of the opinion that no mass-movement of any type can be started now because it would lead to violence: 'If any mass movement is undertaken, at the present moment, in the name of non-violence, it will resolve itself into violence largely unorganised and organised in some cases' (*Harijan*, July 8, 1939). With this argument he justifies stopping of the struggle in the States and also his disapproval of the decision to launch a 'Nation-wide struggle to win independence'. Gandhiji's political line amounts to simple constitutional Reformism. He covers his rejection of struggle, by the slogan of a Utopian and unattainable Non-Violent struggle based on the theory of change of heart. This can in practice only lead to ignoble compromise. The organizational implications of his line is a Congress of true satyagrahis, who have non-violence and trust in God, in their hearts. In practice this means flowing down the mass basis of the Congress, isolation of the left and the masses. This means disruption.

The root cause of the present conflict in the Congress is the growing conflict between these two lines. It is no good denying the fact that it is a conflict between 'Contraries'. The *Harijan* line which has been triumphing especially during the last 12 months is contrary to the line of Unity with the new mass force and with its new technique of mass struggle—the line which the Congress turned to, in its Lucknow and Faizpur sessions. During the last 18 months or so the phenomenal rise of the workers' and peasants' struggles have frightened the vested interests. They are pulling the National leadership back from the line of Lucknow and Faizpur. The bourgeoisie frightened by the rise of mass-struggle is resolving back from the path of united front. In doing so it is not only harming the interest, because the *Harijan* line to which they are retreating is the line which will lead to the disruption of the National struggle and to defeat.

It is the task of the Socialists and Communists and Kisan Sabhaites, as representatives of the new mass force and the mass technique of struggle, to fight against this retreat—this effort to drag the Congress away from the path of united front, and a united advance against the common enemy. Socialists and Communists must fight to overcome this anti-struggle tendency which has brought the Congress into this crisis, of disruption. Not to understand this political implications of the present crisis to deny that crisis mainly arises out of the growing constitutionalism and reformism of a section of the Congress leadership, is to forget Socialism. But this is exactly what Dr Ram Manohar Lohia does in 'A call to the Leftists' (*Free Press Journal*, 28 August 1939). Dr Lohia seems to reduce the whole question to a matter of mutual recrimination. 'The contrary outlook in the Congress have largely been created artificially.' Dr Lohia forgets that the contrary outlooks and methods of work are really traceable to the role of the two most important classes in our national struggle namely the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. What is needed to solve the present crisis is not and 'above the battle super class standpoint but the robust outlook of proletarian socialism'. To solve the present crisis says Dr Lohia, all that need be done is to stop 'the dangerous pastime of

labelling and characterizing each other this or that mentality'—and to turn to individual problems such as Hindu-Muslim Unity, war-resistance, peasant and Labour awakening and so on.

Does Dr Lohia think that these problems can be tackled apart and away from the two 'contrary outlooks?' There is no escape from the basis conflict of political polities which is raging inside the Congress. The Socialists and Communist are not bringing in a new policy. They stand for the consistent and further development of the policy adopted at Lucknow and Faizpur. They are opposing the attempts to revise and go back upon that policy. They are not doing this by mere wordy conflict or squabbles. They are doing it by patiently popularizing the positive resolutions of the Congress. They are doing it by organising the National Struggle Week, which ended just now in which they attempted to win the masses for a policy of unity in the Congress and advance against the Common enemy.

How will the Working Committee handle the question of the war-crisis? We apprehend, from the argument advanced at the beginning of these notes that, the decision would be I favour of neutrality and passivity. This would be disastrous. It would enable the enemy as we said, to attack our forces singly and defeat them. We therefore suggest the following line of action: Our ministries must function as peoples' ministries. They must seek to carry out the Congress mandate positively. They must issue orders to the Provincial and Civil Services under them not to assist the military or Central authorities in recruitment war loans, troop and material transport, or in any other measure of war preparation. This will precipitate a clash between the Ministries and the Governors which will be clash between the democratic will of the people and the autocratic Government of India Act. This Constitutional clash must be the signal for unleashing a mass movement for war-resistance and against the Government of India Act. The mass action which we must immediately unfold should be as follows:

1. General one-day protest hartal and protest strike against the autocratic Government of India Act.
2. A campaign of anti-recruitment, anti war-loan, meetings and agitation.
3. A campaign to stop export and transport of war-materials through the organisations of Dock and Transport workers.
4. Boycott of British and Japanese goods.
5. Protest Hartals and strikes against repressive actions under Emergency Laws.

If our anti-war resolution is not merely to be a threat and a bargaining device, we must back the dismissals of our ministries with such concrete mass-action. Only in that case would we be able to exert maximum pressure on British Imperialism and preserve our fighting forces from disruption and defeat. A mass struggle at such a time cannot but open up new possibilities for us to win our final battle for independence.

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69. The Second Imperialist War

Article by G. Adhikari, *New Age*, Vol. 6, No. 5, October 1939

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Twenty-five years back when the last war broke out, people were told that it was a war to defend Belgium,¹ that German barbarians were enemies of peace and civilisation and that Britain was fighting to protect the self-determination of small nations. What were the real issues involved

then? Long before the last world war broke out, Lenin² gave an analysis of imperialism. He pointed out that the development of world capitalism had reached a phase when sharp conflicts must break out between rival groups of capitalist rulers contending for a New redistribution of markets, colonies and spheres of influence.³ British and French imperialism and almost shared out the whole world between themselves. German imperialism, coming later on, on the scene, was seeking to unsettle this share-out by force. This was the basic conflict during the last war.

Despotism stood opposed to despotism, injustice-to-injustice, force-to-force. Dealt short during the partition of the world, the German imperialists wanted to seize Central Europe, conquer the Balkans,⁴ bring the Near East under their influence, subjugate the Ukraine and entrench themselves on the banks of the Black Sea. The Russian imperialists wanted to enlarge the decayed Tsarist empire, demolish Turkey and occupy the Dardanelles⁵ and the Bosphorus.⁶ The French imperialists wanted to regain Alsace-Lorraine⁷ and ensure their hegemony over Europe. The English imperialists wanted to repulse their German competitors and round off and consolidate their world empire.

Such were the real issues involved in the last imperialist war. It was of course a lie when the British and the French bourgeoisie tried to tell the people that they were defending Western Democracy against German Militarism. Nor had the German bourgeois assertion that they were guarding liberty against Tsarist barbarism any grain of truth in it. But the continental socialists and Labour Parties of the Second International believed in these false words. They rallied behind their respective imperialist Governments. They tore up the resolution of the International which was passed at the Congress at Stuttgart⁸ in 1907. This resolution which was based on the these advanced at the Congress by Lenin and Rosa Luxemburg⁹ stated clearly:

'If nevertheless war breaks out, it is the duty of the international proletariat to work its speedy termination and to strike with all their might to utilize the economic and political crisis produced by the war, to rouse the political consciousness of the masses of the people and thereby hasten the downfall of the capitalist class-rule.'

The refusal to recognise the imperial of the last war, failure to act up to the principles of international socialism on the part of the reformist social democratic and labour leaders of Germany, France and England resulted in the break up of the International. In fact the first mortal victim of the world war was the Second International. These reformist leaders renounced all trace of internationalism. They voted war credits to their respective bourgeois Governments, beat their war-drums and dragged the workers into the imperialist war of conquest. The unity of the international working class was destroyed. The socialist parties became the tail end of the bourgeois war parties in the belligerent countries. Only one Socialist Party remained true to the principles of international socialism and that was the Bolshevik Party¹⁰—the party of Lenin and Stalin.¹¹ The Bolsheviks opposed imperialist bourgeoisie with determination. They mercilessly expressed the imperialist robber character of the war and set us up a goal for the proletariat in each country the defeat and overthrow of the bourgeoisie, the transformation of the imperialist war to a war to end capitalism—the source of war.¹²

The Bolshevik Party, pursuing the policy which was in the interest of the exploited masses, was able to win the support of the entire Russian working class and of the Russian peasantry. When the hour of the Tsar struck they were able to sweep away the descript autocratic regime and its capitalist successors and establish Workers' and Peasants' rule. The victory of the Bolsheviks laid the basis of building up socialism in one-sixth part of the globe. It created on the one hand the Soviet Union, which backed by the military strength of workers and peasants' army was to become a mighty force working for peace. On the other hand, it gave birth to the Third Communist International, which gathered together all the revolutionary elements of the old international, striving for a genuine unity of proletariat against war and for revolution.

The Social democratic treachery at the outbreak of the last war found its logical continuation in their betrayal of the revolutions which broke out on the continent after the war. The Revolutionary workers of the European countries had no firm and monolithic parties like the Bolshevik Party to lead them. This was the legacy of years of reformism. The social-democratic agents of the bourgeoisie in Germany, Austria and Italy and other countries retained the upper hand. They prevented the development of the Socialist revolutions. They united with the generals and officers of the old regime to crush the Workers' revolutions in Germany, Austria and Hungary. The result was the capitalism was saved to breed another war. The result was that the old feudal bourgeois army and bureaucracy, the reactionary classes who were saved and left in power, blew up the sham democracy, built with their aid and established fascism—the naked dictatorship of the bourgeoisie.

It was during these Post-war days and years of social democratic treachery and counter-revolution that the seeds of fascism and fascist aggression were sown and the road cleared for the second imperialist world war. This war has matured and developed under entirely different conditions than the last war. The post-war world was split up into two halves. The socialist power of the Soviet Union occupying one sixth part of the world was not only out of the imperialist partitioning of the world but was a force working against imperialism and for peace. Capitalism which still ruled the rest of the world was not the same. It had entered into a state of permanent crisis. Imperialist revelries remained and sharpened but together with it two new contradictions had grown. Proletarian movement grew both in magnitude and revolutionary intensity (growth of the Communist parties), threatening imperialism at home. Revolutionary independence struggle of the colonies and subject nationals grew up in China, India and Indonesia threatening imperialism at its Colonial periphery.

The existence of the Soviet Union and the growth of the revolutionary movements in the capitalist and colonial countries were powerful forces working for peace. Immediately after the November Revolution, the Soviet Government called upon the peoples of the warring nationals immediately to conclude Armistice and conclude a peace without annexations and based upon the right of self-determination of all nations. Such a peace would have been possible, had proletarian revolution triumphed in Germany and spread to other European countries. Had this come about, would imperialism would have received such a serious blow that the second imperialist war would have been well nigh impossible. But the revolutions failed because of the disunity of the working class, and the betrayal of social democracy. Instead of the peace without annexations which the Soviet proposed, came the Peace Treaty of Versailles bearing the seed of the present war.

The Treaty of Versailles was a dictated peace—a peace of Vengeance. It sought to solve the inter-imperialist conflict which had given rise to the last war: (1) by maintaining the defeated countries especially Germany in a state of political inferiority and by ensuring their spoilation by victor states (2) It made division of the spoils of war among Victor states, fixing the frontiers of Europe, distributing colonial mandates in such a way that their hegemony throughout the world was maintained. The peace system of Versailles, in as much as it temporarily solved the inter-imperialist conflict, made it possible for capitalist nations to combine against the new enemy, the Soviet Union. Immediately after the armistice the British, French, American and Japanese imperialism, combined to support a war of intervention against the Soviet Union. Even after the complete rout and defeat of the interventionists, British and French imperialists pursued the policy of isolation and encircling the Soviet Union with hostile pacts and of provoking a war against it.

But the inter-imperialist conflicts broke out again in all their virulence after the onset of the great crisis of 1929–33. During the period of partial stabilization (1922–28) new German imperialism had begun to rise. Revolutionary forces rose in Germany too but were unable to take advantage of the period of crisis and make a bid for power, because of the split created in the working class by

Social Democracy. German imperialism was able to throw off the mask of democracy, crush revolutionary forces and establish fascist dictatorship. The period of the great crisis was also the period of a new revolutionary wave in Europe and in the East. The emergence of the Soviets in China, revolutions in Spain, CD Movement in India, revolutionary clashes in Germany and Austria, rise of revolutionary wave in France, were significant events of the period. This period also coincided with the phenomenal rise of the Soviet Union. British imperialism, true to its traditions, now began to support Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy as bulwarks of reaction against the rising tide of revolution. Germany was allowed to stop its reparation payments. Naval agreement with Britain allowed Germany to rebuild its navy. Hitler introduced universal conscription. This meant the virtual collapse of the system of Versailles—the weakening of the hegemony of France in Europe and the opening up the road to the expansion of German imperialism on the familiar old lines.

The great crisis and its revolutionary aftermath opens up a new period of inter-imperial conflict in which Japanese, Italian and German imperialism begin a new partition of the world by force. Japan attacks Manchuria, Italy seizes Abyssinia, and Germany prepares for her drive towards the east. In 1935 it was quite clear that the setting of a new imperialist war was getting ready. The Communist international correctly foresaw the developments, warned the people that the second imperialist war was coming and called for a fight against it. In its resolution on war at the Seventh World Congress the International pointed out that as a result of the great economic crisis, an intensified struggle on the world market has begun, leading to an economic war and a new partition of the world. Singling out German fascism as the main instigator of war, it predicted in 1935 all the developments which have taken place in the succeeding years:

‘The adventurist plan of the German fascists are very far—reaching containing a war of revenue against France, dismemberment of Czechoslovakia, annexation of Austria, destruction of independence of the Baltic states, which they are striving to convert into a base of attack on the Soviet Union, and the wresting of the Soviet Ukraine from the USSR. They are demanding colonies and are endeavouring to arouse moods in favour of world war for a new partition of the world.’

‘The dominant circles of the British bourgeoisie support German armaments in order to weaken the hegemony of France on the European Continent, to turn the spear head of German armaments from the west to the east, and to direct the aggressiveness against the Soviet Union.... This policy of British imperialism is one of the factors accelerating the outbreak of the world imperialist war.’

Four Years of Aggression

A review of the crowded events of the last four years is enough to convince any one of the correctness of this analysis. This is quite clear that fascism and fascist aggression notably that of Germany is the main cause of the present war. But it must not be forgotten that fascism and its aggressive phase are the product of the extreme decay of the world capitalist system as seen in the great economic crisis. The repartition of the world by force was begun by Japan when it conquered Manchuria and occupied the four-provinces of North China (1933–34). This was followed by the conquest of Abyssinia by Italy (1935–36). The middle of 1936 saw the beginning of the fascist rebellion in Spain and the bloody war of intervention raised by German and Italian fascism against the Spanish republic. This object was to destroy the victory of popular front in Spain and its alliance with the popular front in France. They wanted to convert Spain into a base of their joint military operations in a future war of aggression. In 1937 Japanese imperialism took advantage of the preoccupation of the European powers to launch a war of conquest against China proper. In March 1938 Hitler, having sufficiently consolidated his military strength proceeds to carry the land-policy outlined in ‘Mein Kampf’, Austria is annexed by force.¹³ Within four months, the well-known technique of Nazi disruption is brought to bear on Sudetan land. Sudetan land is annexed

and the disintegration of the Czechoslovakian republic begins. This year opened with the fall of republican Spain. This was soon followed by Hitler's absorption of Slovakia and the annexation of Ruthenia by Hungary. The disappearance of Czechoslovakia opens Hitler's march towards South Eastern Europe. His next step was to take Danzig and the Corridor, dominate Poland on the one hand and Hungary on the other and thus to spread out in the Balkans and the Near East. Italy was preparing to share in the adventure by annexing Albania and dominating Yugoslavia.

Instigators and Abettors of War

This long catalogue of the aggressive acts of fascist states, headed by Nazi Germany clearly bring them out as the chief instigators of the present war. But that is only one side of the picture. Each one of these developments mean the unsettling of the status quo of the last war. They meant the complete annulment of the Treaties of Versailles and Washington (Washington Treaty fixed the relations of Naval Powers in the Pacific and the 'rights' of foreign powers in China). These acts of aggression meant the destruction of small nations who were the victims and a menace to the Soviet Union against whom Nazi Germany was openly avowing its aggressive designs. But above all they meant a threat to the status quo of the great imperialist powers namely England, France and America. Japan's conquest of Abyssinia was a menace to Suez Canal and the British interests in Sudan. Italy was making new claims against French Empire (Tunis). Italian domination of Spain and Albania was a menace to the British passage to the East. German expansion and domination of South Eastern Europe was a threat to the British interests in the Near East. It was the interests of British imperialism which were every time affected by these successive acts of aggression. British imperialism with its powerful resources would have been able at every stage to check this development. British imperialists now talk of democracy, and of destroying Hitlerism and claim that they are fighting this war to make the world safe from aggression. Why did they not from the very start take effective measures against 'war mongers'. If they were the guardians of peace, why did they sabotage the League action against Japan's aggression in Manchuria? Why did they reduce the economic sanctions to be imposed against Italy for her attack against Abyssinia to a force? Why did they undermine the League of Nations and the System of Collective security by themselves proposing an amendment to the section 15 of the League Covenant? Why did they organise and uphold the monstrous fraud of 'no-intervention' in Spain and allow Nazi and Fascist armaments to destroy the Spanish republic? Why did they allow Hitler to arm, to build up an air and a Submarine fleet? Why did they help him to take Austria? Why did Chamberlain grovel before Hitler at Munich and allow him to take Sudeten land? Why did he allow the destruction of Czech democracy the Czech Army and the Franco-Soviet-Czech Pact? And to come to the very recent past why did he sabotage the Anglo-Soviet anti-aggression pact which would have effectively stopped Hitler and averted this war?

The Dilemma for British Foreign Policy

These questions bring out the apparent contradictions in British imperialist policy. This contradiction is characteristic of the new situation which arose on the eve of the second imperialist war. In the present period a new conflict is super-imposed on the old inter-imperialist conflict. That is the conflict created by the rise of the Soviet Union on the one hand and the growth of revolutionary movements in capitalist and colonial countries on the other. British imperialism is faced by the rise of the new German imperialism pursuing the old aims, and by the Italian and Japanese aggression. But it was also faced by the growing revolutionary potentialities of the Soviet Union and the Red Army, by the Spanish revolution, the revolution in China, by the rise of popular front in France and the developments in its own country. Immediately after the war it was able to

mobilize all the reactionary forces together to crush the Soviet Union and the revolutions on the continent. It failed in the former objective but succeeded in the latter. A decade later it is confronted with another revolutionary wave and by the invincible power of the Soviet Union—trying to act in unison with the anti-Fascist popular forces, to defeat the game of the fascist warmongers. In this situation British imperialism deliberately pursues a policy of aiding the fascists, to crush the forces of revolution, and to provoke a war against the Soviet. British imperialists allowed the fascists to destroy the popular front in Spain and in France. They destroyed Czech democracy and Czech-Soviet Pact. By doing so they destroyed effective checks against Nazi-fascist aggression. They did this because they wanted to solve the inter-imperialist contradiction in a different way viz., by achieving a European Four Power Pact aimed against the Soviet Union. The meaning of the policy of 'appeasement' was that Nazi greed was to be satisfied and the expense of small nations, and of the Soviet Union. Chamberlain destroyed Czechoslovakia and executed a graceless surrender before Hitler because he hoped to get a four power Pact aimed at the Soviet. But he failed. At Munich, the last barrier to Hitler's expansion was removed. He could not more be checked. The inter-imperialist contradictions could no longer be squared inside a four-power pact. Munich and its after-math resulted in tremendous sharpening of the conflict between Nazi Germany on the one hand and the Anglo-French block on the other.

Failure of Chamberlain's Diplomacy

Chamberlain's next move to get out of the impasse was to stage another and a grander Munich. For this he wanted to use negotiations with the Soviet for an anti-aggression pact to bring pressure upon Hitler. Perhaps Hitler would agree to a settlement on the Danzig issue, renounce the South Eastern drive and turn his attention to Ukraine and attack the Soviet through Baltic States. It was thought the mere threat of 'encirclement' with an Anglo-Franco Soviet anti-aggression pact would be enough. Failing that Chamberlain wanted a one-sided pact with the Soviet. Soviet was to fight Hitler to prevent him expanding Eastwards British interests. But Britain refused to guarantee the Union against a German attack through the Baltic. The Soviet refused to be used in this manner to serve British imperial interests but proposed a straight forward cast-iron anti-aggression pact which would have completely stopped all Nazi aggression and strangled Nazism itself. Chamberlain did not want that. The result was that after five months of futile negotiations which failed to impress Hitler, Chamberlain found himself faced with the attack to Danzig and the ultimatum to Poland. The Soviet finding that an imperialist war was now inevitable accepted the German offer for a non-aggression pact. It was a decisive Victory of Soviet diplomacy—Firstly because Germany faced with an imperialist rival was forced to renounce its anti-Soviet aims. Secondly, because the Soviet was able to preserve its neutrality and keep away from the imperialist war. Thirdly, because it left the imperialist rivals to fight, weaken each other creating conditions favourable for the revolutions in Europe.

The War Aims of British Imperialism

The outbreak of the war is signal failure of the diplomacy of Chamberlain. The reactionary imperialist clique behind the British premier did not want the war not at least in this way. They wanted to involve Soviet Russia also in the war against Germany. It is a failure for Chamberlain because he failed in the four power pact through appeasement, he failed to provoke an anti-Soviet war by keeping Britain out and finally he failed to involve the Soviet in the war making her fight his battles. The British imperialists in spite of the profuse decelerations they are making now never wanted to fight for democracy or against fascism. All their efforts right up to the last moment of the outbreak of the war were to achieve a settlement with Hitler—an appeasement—a Munich.

It was their criminal game to sabotage the Anglo-Soviet Pact which has landed the people of the British and French Empires in this mass-slaughter. Even now their 'war aims' are not the destruction of fascism—let alone Imperialism (that would be suicide). British imperialism is fighting to preserve its *status quo*, its empire. Yet is out to 'destroy Hitlerism' (not Fascism). It would like Hitler to be replaced by an equally reactionary Military clique which would be willing to come to a settlement with Britain. It is steadily keeping up the anti-soviet Propaganda. It still hopes that Hitler may be replaced by another reactionary government which would be willing to join with Britain in a holy war against the Soviet. These are the war-aims of British Imperialism.

The Soviet Union's Fight for Peace

On the eve of the last war the Working class movement and organisation were not strong enough, not revolutionary enough to unfold an effective anti-war movement to stop war. On the other hand when war came it simply broke up thanks to the reformism and treachery of Social-Democratic leaders. This was not so in the years that immediately preceded the present war. The Soviet Union backed by the might of the Workers and peasants' Red Army had grown into a great power which had to be reckoned with. It had joined the League of Nations and was trying to uphold the system of Collective Security which fascist nations were trying to disrupt. With the further development of the fascist aggression the Soviet attempted to build a system of anti-aggression pacts based on the Franco-Soviet-Czech pact. The Soviet Union always stood for building up a powerful peace front of non-aggression nations in order to put a stop to fascist aggression and preserve peace. But the efforts of the Soviet power for peace could only be successful if they could be reinforced by the efforts of the proletariat in capitalist countries. A peace front with the Soviet Union could only be realised when the proletariat in the various non-aggression countries would succeed in replacing their reactionary pro-fascist governments by popular front anti-fascist ones. Therefore the struggle for peace required unity of the proletariat against capitalist reaction—against fascist supporters and building up of a broad anti-fascist peoples' front in the non-aggressor countries. That is why, when the Communist International warned the world of the approach of the second imperialist war, they called upon the proletariat to close up their ranks, so that the united proletariat may be able to build up the broad peoples front against war and fascism and to defeat the ear machinations of the reactionary ruling cliques in France and England. Communists took the initiative in commenting proletarian unity and building up powerful popular fronts in France and Spain (1934–37). The mighty success of these first efforts at unity succeeded in starving off the attack of fascism in France.

Who Betrayed Peace?

But the unity achieved was not strong enough to withstand fresh fascist onslaught. Its weakness lay in the fact that the reactionary social democratic leaders were not yet completely isolated. It is reactionary social democratic leaders who prevented the unity of the French working class in a consistent fight against the criminal policy of non-intervention in Spain. That was the main reason for the defeat of the heroic popular front of Spain. Similarly French socialists refused to join hands with the communists in fighting Daladier¹⁴ when he cooperated with Chamberlain in staging Munich in 1938. In England the reactionary Labour Party leadership persistently rejected the policy of building a popular front with the Communists and Liberals to oust Chamberlain. The reactionary Trade Unionists of European countries refused to allow the Soviet Trade Unions to affiliate themselves to the International Federation of Trade Unions. Finally the Social democratic and Labour leaders believed the imperialist lie that it was the Soviet who was delaying the Anglo-Soviet Pact and joined with the bourgeoisie in attacking the Soviet instead of joining with the

Communists to bring pressure upon their governments to sign the pact immediately. *Social democracy must share the guilt for war in as much as it betrayed peace.* Now that the war has broken out we once again find the disgusting spectacle of the Social-Democratic and Labour leaders of France and England joining their voice in the chorus of imperialist warmongers. They are quietly submitting to the semi-fascist measures which the 'democratic' governments are imposing upon the people. French Socialists have nothing to say about the suppression of '*Humanite*' by Daladier. Nor do the British Labour leaders worry about the repression against British Communists. In their enthusiasm for the 'war for democracy' they quietly forget that British imperialism is introducing fascist methods in colonial countries in the name of war. All what they are busy about is the condemnation of 'Soviet treachery'.

'Refashioning The World'—Role of the Soviet

All the chatter of the imperialists and their social democratic and labour lackeys cannot make this imperialist war into 'war for democracy' and the Soviet into an 'ally of the Nazis'. The second imperialist war is bound to refashion the world, by leading to the defeat of both fascism and imperialism. In this outcome the Soviet Union has secured the defeat of the diplomacy of Hitler as well as of Chamberlain. Hitler has been forced to wind up his anti-comintern front and his war designs against the Soviet. Chamberlain is defeated in his plan to stage another Munich and forced to fight Hitler. The military action of the Red Army which is condemned as 'a stab in the back of Poland' has forever smashed Hitler's 'Drang nach Ost'. The occupation of the Eastern Poland by the Red Army coupled with the diplomatic action which the Soviet is taking in conjunction with Turkey to protect the Balkan States completely closes the door on Hitler's eastern ambitions. Chamberlain should be pleased with this development. It checks Nazi expansion in the Near East. But he is not. He shudders to think of the revolutionary consequences of the march of the Red Army into Poland. Chamberlain knows that the Polish proletariat and people would like to get rid of their corrupt, land-lord-fascist government which landed them into this bloody war by refusing to agree to the entry of the Soviet Army into Poland in case of German aggression. Chamberlain knows that the advance of the Red army is assisted by the Polish army and greeted by the Polish people. The presence of the Red Army on the Slovakian boundary where the Slovaks are in revolt, and so near Germany, where the discontent against Hitler is rising cannot but be of the greatest revolutionary consequences. The second imperialist war began with the much-abused pact of non-aggression between the soviet and Germany. It would end with a pact of real friendship between Soviet Union; Poland and Germany but this would be with a Soviet Poland and a people's or Soviet Germany.

Convert Imperialist War into a Democratic War

Communists and Revolutionary Socialists in England and France who have this perspective before them will go on mercilessly exposing the imperialist character of the present war, and attempting to win the majority of the proletariat for a fight against the present war mongering governments. Only when the present governments of Chamberlain and Daladier are replaced by real anti-fascist popular governments would be possible to convert the present imperialist war into a real democratic war against German fascism with the help of the Soviet and bring about the downfall of Hitler. Only when this is achieved will it be possible to affect a democratic peace removing the threat of aggression and granting the national minorities, of Poland, Czechoslovakia and Germany full freedom from oppression within the frame work of Soviet democracy spreading over Central Europe.

These are the mighty changes scheduled to follow as the outcome of the second imperialist war. They will not come automatically. They will come as the result of bitter struggles on the part of the proletariat in the countries of Europe. They will change the face of the capitalist world.

¹ Bounded on the north-west by the North Sea, on the north and north-east by the Netherlands, on the east by Germany, on the South-east by Luxembourg, and on the west and South-West by France.

² Vladimir Ilich Ulyanov Lenin (1870–1924); founder of the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks); leader of the Bolshevik Revolution (1917), and the architect, builder, and the first head of the Soviet State; as a thinker, he was the formulator of Marxism-Leninism, the official Communist ideology.

³ In *Imperialism: The Latest Stage in the Development of Capitalism* (1924); and *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism* (1933, 1939, 1947).

⁴ Since the early 19th century, the name Balkan, a Turkish word meaning mountain, has been applied to the eastern-most of the three great southern peninsulas of Europe.

⁵ Dardanelles, a narrow strait in north-west Turkey which extends north-eastward to link the Aegean Sea with the Sea of Marmora. Its vital location has given it international political importance in what is regarded as the Straits Question.

⁶ Bosphorus; strait uniting the Black Sea and the Sea of Marmara and separating parts of Asiatic Turkey from European Turkey. With the weakening centuries, the European powers concerned with the control of the Bosphorus and Dardanelles, imposed various schemes of international control. In 1936 Turkey was allowed to reoccupy the straits.

⁷ Alsace-Lorraine, an area comprising the present French department of Haut-Rhin, Bas Rhin, and Moselle; between 1871 and 1945, its possession was disputed by France and Germany. Alsace-Lorraine was returned to France after World War I in 1919; it was representative-annexed by Germany during World War II; it was again returned to France in 1945.

⁸ Stuttgart, capital of Baden-Württemberg Land (State) in South-Western Germany, astride the Neckar River.

⁹ Rosa Luxemburg (1871–1919); revolutionary activist and theoretician who played a key role in the founding of the Polish Social Democratic Party and the German Communist Party

¹⁰ Bolsheviks (those of the Majority); members of the Russian Social-Democratic Workers' Party who, led by Lenin, seized control of the government in October 1917. They dubbed their opponents 'the Mensheviks' (Those of the Minority).

¹¹ Joseph Stalin (1879–1953); joined an underground Georgian revolutionary organisation in 1900; secretary-general of the Bolshevik Party's central committee (1922); after Lenin died in 1924, Stalin became the dominant figure in the international Communist movement; in 1941 he directed the Soviet armies as they repulsed the German invaders.

¹² *The Hinustan Year Book* of 1939 recorded: 'A little less than twenty years ago, the Big Four of 1914—Woodrow Wilson, President of the United States, Lloyd George, Prime Minister of Great Britain, George Clemennau, Premier of France and Orlando, Premier of Italy drew up the most famous document known in history as Treaty of Versailles. The people of the world tired of war expected that this new treaty would bring forth a brave New World.

But a strange irony of fate happened at the end of this year. The big four of 1938—Adolph Hitler, Leader and Chancellor of Germany, Neville Chamberlain, Prime Minister of Great Britain, Edouard Deladier, Premier of France and Benito Mussolini, the Duce and Premier of Italy met at Munich to avert a war by tearing up another clause of that famous Treaty.

In 1919 no German was Among the big four. 1938 a Germany dominated the big four, this alone illustrates the tragic fate of the Versailles Treaty. Today the question arises: What remains of 440 articles of the treaty?

There are four main divisions of the Treaty of Versailles:

1. Establishment of the League of Nations;
2. The territorial provisions establishing the New boundaries of Germany;
3. The military clauses limiting Germany's armed strength;
4. The Economic and Financial sections dealing with Germany's responsibility for losses incurred by the victorious powers and people

In October 1933 Hitler withdrew Germany from the League. Statesmen no longer pack up their bags and fly to Geneva but instead they fly to Munich, Godesburg, London and Paris to settle their problems.

Regarding territorial provinces, the treaty of Versailles has been greatly altered. Germany tore up the clause recognizing Austria's independence when she marched into that country last March and annexed it. Germany's recognition of the independence of the Czechoslovak Republic was also torn in pieces by annexing Sudeten areas.

The Military Causes of the Versailles Treaty has become merely academic today. Secretly Germany went on rebuilding her armed forces and in 1935 Hitler tore up the Military provisions of the Treaty limiting Germany's army and openly began the expansion of German army, navy and air forces. Today Germany is one of the mightiest military powers of the world.

Regarding the reparation provisions of the Treaty a commission was set up to supervise the payment of the huge sums involved. Germany was able to get rid herself of the financial burden imposed by the Treaty before Hitler came to power. Inability to fulfil her obligations led to cancellation of reparations in 1932.

¹² The Austrian crisis began in February 1939 when following a meeting between Hitler and Austrian President Schuschnigg, the Austrian Cabinet was compelled to include the Nazi Minister at the command of Herr Hitler.

In the meantime the Austrian President declared that Government would maintain the solidarity of Austrian territory and on March 11, Austrian Cabinet postponed the national plebiscite due to be held on the following Sunday to decide the following question—Are you in favour of free, independent Austria?

With the stoppage of the plebiscite, Germany invaded Austria on Friday, 11 March. Hitler sent his troops across the frontier at three points. The country surrendered to him without a blow during the night on Sunday, 13 March. Austria was officially proclaimed united with Germany as a state of the Reich. The Vienna Government decreed a free and secret plebiscite to be held in Austria on the question on 10 April. The final figure of 10 April plebiscite was 99.08 per cent of the votes for Hitler. In a speech at Austria, Hitler declared 'the greatest achievement of my life.'

¹³ Edouard Daladier (1884–1970); French politician who as premier signed the Munich Pact (30 September 1938), which enabled Nazi Germany to take possession of the Sudetenland, a region of Czechoslovakia, without fear of opposition from either England or France. When France fell to Germany in June 1940, Daladier was arrested by the Vichy regime and tried in February 1942.

70. Imperialist War and the Communist Party's Declaration

This is an English translation of a Bengali leaflet, published by the Bengal Committee of the Communist Party of India. It was forfeited by the Government of Bengal under the orders issued by H.J. Twynam, Secretary to the Government of Bengal. Home (Political), F. No. 37, 1939, NAI

October 1939

You must have read in the newspapers that 'India has also declared War against Germany' simultaneously with Britain. But is that the India of the Indians which declared War against Germany? Did anybody consult the Indians or the leaders of the Indian democratic movement, viz., Gandhi or Nehru or the Congress before the War was started on the plea of protecting democracy? Did anybody care to take the opinion of even the Central Assembly which consists of the lackeys of the Viceroy.

None cared to consult. India declared War and the need for consulting Indian opinion was not felt. The Viceroy made a proclamation and India was at War. Lacs of lives and the entire wealth of India were thereby bound to the War wheels of Britain but the Indian people were deprived of their right to have their say in the matter.

The War was for democracy but with its declaration the democratic rights of India were ground under heel. Nevertheless Mahatma Gandhi, our leader of non-violence, has issued a statement saying that it behoves us to cooperate unconditionally and that it would not do to indulge in any sort of bargaining as Britain is at War to protect Poland's democratic right and independence. What did we receive in return for our expressing sympathy in the fight for Poland's independence?

The Government has removed the last vestige of the little liberty we had to speak, write and move about. We received the Defence Ordinance and the censorship of the Press. We will not be allowed to write a single line in the newspapers without the sanction of the CID and to hold a single meeting without the permission of the Government. We received the spies of the CID at every street corner who will watch the sons and daughters of our country, report against them and finally arrest and put them in jails. We were faced with an increase in the price of commodities.

In addition, the Provincial Ministries have been denied their fundamental rights and have literally been converted into dummy bodies. Dhulkar, the Whip of the Congress Assembly party of UP has recently admitted this in a clear manner. In spite of this, we have to express sympathy for Britain, give up all fight against the British Government and all bargaining. With the Defence Ordinance, we have been deprived of our rights of citizenship, with the increase in prices, our

economic liberty is lost but nevertheless we have to lend our sympathy to Britain because it is fighting for Poland's freedom.

Britain's War against Germany was that only meant for ensuring Poland's independence or for protecting its own Imperialist interest?

Poland's independence is a matter of only the other day. After the defeat of Germany in the last Imperialist War the independent states of Poland, Britain and France had a greater aim of encircling Germany with these vassal free states so that the Imperialists of Germany may not do any harm to those in Britain and France. Poland's Government was in effect Fascist Dictatorship. There is not much difference in the principles of Hitler's Government and that of Poland.

Britain had to launch into this terrible war to protect democratic rights of such a Poland and it was so ordered that we have also to stake our life and wealth for its independence. Whither was this love for liberty on the part of Britain when Italy ruined the free Abyssinia of so many years?

The lights of freedom in the states of Austria, Albania and Czechoslovakia were extinguished one by one under Hitler and Mussolini's threat of force but Britain and France did not step in at the time to guarantee the protection of democratic rights. When Hitler and Mussolini crushed Spain's democracy, Britain and France did not consider it necessary to protect democracy but actually helped the Fascists in the name of neutrality. The horrible aggression of Hitler—like barbarous Japanese Imperialism is still continuing on the lives, rights and liberty of 40 crores of men and women of Great China, which has kept the eternal light of civilisation burning since the earliest days of the human races of the world. Britain did not consider it worthwhile to launch into any war to protect the democratic rights of Independent China: Rather Chamberlain is wooing Japan for a friendly alliance in spite of the kicks by the Japanese soldiers at Tientsin!

We appreciate the Polish struggle for independence against German aggression in spite of Poland's being ridden with a semi-fascist dictatorship and have full sympathy for them! But there is no greater hypocrisy than the Imperialist Britain and France to assert that they were fighting for Poland's freedom alone.

France and Britain have taken to war to keep their bloody, abominable and terrific Imperialist hold unshaken. Britain has started war only to keep alive its own Imperialist exploitation and bloodthirstiness against any attack from German fascist imperialism. Therefore this war of Britain and France is no war for guaranteeing democracy but to keep up the horror of Imperialism.

The war of Britain and France is not a war for Poland's independence. If that was so, Chamberlain and Daladier would not have instigated Poland to refuse the help of Soviet Russia. Poland was crushed to pieces within two weeks by Nazi Germany's brute military invasion but the British Government did not allow Poland to seek for Red Army's help. Today when the Soviet has sought to bring within its fold at least a portion of the inhabitants of the war-ridden Poland and protect them against any further brutal aggression at the hands of the Nazi free-booters, Chamberlain is crying aloud saying that Poland is being engulfed by the Soviet. The truth is that the real intention of Britain is not to save Poland from danger but to safeguard its own economic interests with the help of the erstwhile Polish Government which was functioning under the tutelage of England. This war is intended to keep the Imperialist rule and exploitation in force. Therefore being trodden under the heels of Imperialism, we must anyhow resist war.

Who has given so much rope to Hitler today? It is Chamberlain and other gangsters of his ilk. Britain and France could have throttled Germany long ago but instead of doing that they have sought to provoke Germany time and again and have been responsible for increasing Germany's strength by acquiescing in the annexation of Austria and Czechoslovakia. They have all along refused to enter into any pact with the powerful Soviet against Hitler. Their desire was to set the more and more powerful Germany against Soviet Russia because that would on the one hand

mean the annihilation of the Bolsheviks—the enemies of Imperialism and on the other hand the securing of army concessions favourable to their Imperialist designs by threatening the war-weakened Germany.

But the dirty imperialism politics of Chamberlains have suffered a defeat at the hands of the scientific statesmanship of the Soviet which alone has built real freedom for mankind Upon the ruins of exploitation and oppression. The war which Chamberlain and his imperialist satellites were actually wanting has appeared indeed but the war which was intended against Russia went back upon Chamberlain himself.

Hence Chamberlain or in other words British Imperialism is equally responsible with Hitler for this dreadful and ghastly war.

We can have no sympathy with the interests of British Imperialism. We must resist this war. The weakness on the part of any leader cannot make us deviate from the right lines. To us the Congress which is the great national institution is greater than the Congress leaders themselves. The nation unanimously adopted the following resolution at the Haripura Congress:

India cannot be a party to any Imperialist war; we cannot stake out men and money in the interests of British Imperialism. India cannot participate in any war without the express consent of the Indian people. The Congress expresses its disapproval of the various war preparations in India and the efforts to create an atmosphere of an impending war on the plea of army manoeuvres and Air Raid precautions. Any effort to drag India into war has to be resisted.

Our existence and rights are being crushed by the grinding stones of British Imperialist interests in this war. Hence if we are to live at all, this war shall have to be resisted at any cost. In order to provide a safeguard against a rise in the prices of commodities, peasants must demand the cancellation of rents, repudiation of debts and fixation of increased prices for crops. Labourers and all employees should demand increased salary and bonus. If agitation is not started forthwith on these demands, their very existence will be threatened.

Our 'Socialist' leader Jawaharlal has solemnly declared that in the present crisis the world is threatened with demolition and rebuilding. Hence there cannot be any talk of bargaining with British Imperialism but he has stated in the Working Committee's resolution composed by himself that 'everybody will be pleased if the Government holds out a promise to end both Imperialism and Fascism but the need for readjusting the Government in India as far as possible to the British Government of making adjustments 'as far as possible' stinking with the nauseating smell of bargaining?

The days of bargaining are over. This is the time for fight. The day for a combined effort of the unified nation for freedom has arrived. We have to commence the struggle for freedom through resistance against war.

We were told in 1914 that British were involved in war to protect the independence of Belgium. Our leaders extended their heart-felt sympathy to Britain at the time.

Our sympathy brought in its train the heavy chains of the Rowlatt Act and the whipping of our naked sisters at Amritsar. We got instead the shedding of fresh blood of hundreds of Indians on the fields of Jallianwala Bagh. The blood of those countless departed brothers and sisters is beckoning us today.

The world today stands face to face with death as a result of the blood-thirsty propensities of the Imperialist gangsters. The self-sacrificing of the departed heroes of the nation calls upon you today to revivify the nation through death.

Resist the Imperialism War.

Stop the rise in prices of articles. Exact more pay, relax the load of rents and debts.

Make world democracy stronger by establishing democracy in India.
Fight for freedom.

71. Gandhi's Message

CWMG, Vol. 70, p. 229

3 October 1939

It will be a very serious tragedy in this tragic war if Britain is found to fail in the very first test of sincerity of her professions about democracy. Do those declarations, or do they not, include the full freedom of India according to the wishes of her people? This is a very simple and elementary question asked by the Congress. The Congress has the right to ask that question. I hope that the answer will be as is expected by the Congress and, let me say, all those who wish well by Great Britain.

72. India and the War: The Viceroy's Impressions

Viceroy to Secretary of State (Tel.), 3 October 1939, Linlithgow Papers, Acc. No. 2335, NAI

[Extract]

I saw Rajendra Prasad and Nehru for 2.15 hours today; but fear that no advance proved possible. Rajendra Prasad was, I would judge, open to some degree of conviction and war merely repeating a set piece. Nehru was as impervious to argument as Hitler and pretty clearly has made up his mind on demands extensive to a larger degree which we could not contemplate.

I have told them both that I must think matters over in the light of what they said, and must consult with the leaders of other parties, and that if they wish in these circumstances to adjust their time-table and to postpone the meeting of the Working Committee, they would no doubt let me know, though I recognised that the decision on that point must be for them. I emphasized these were matters on which I could not accept the claim of the Congress to be the only party or interests to be consulted, and that so far as I was concerned and quite apart from the obligation on me to refer back to His Majesty's Government, I had to ensure that I was in possession of the mind of all other important parties including the Princes.

Claim as stated today with great emphasis by Nehru is briefly for:

- (a) Declaration which Nehru wishes to be 'full-blooded', positive, and unambiguous, which must use the phrase—absolute freedom for India at the end of the war and provide also for her unfettered liberty to frame her own constitution by means of a Constituent Assembly.
- (b) Such declaration to be accompanied by immediate share of power at Centre, though he admitted that he was not too clear as to the precise machinery involved.

Neither Prasad nor Nehru displayed the least anxiety to face up to the complications of their proposals in terms of reactions on Muslims, Princes, etc. It was interesting to see however that they are clearly profoundly disturbed by the possibility of an All-Parties Conference. I asked them whether if I was driven to have one they thought Congress would attend. They replied that while they could speak only for themselves and *ad referendum* they were disposed to the view that Congress would not attend. I will telegraph further as soon as possible in greater detail but think you will wish to have this immediate resume of the essentials. Questions of representation of India at Peace

Conference was mentioned by Nehru but in general terms only and the whole discussion was on general lines.

I have had today a long protest from Bombay Liberals, Scheduled Castes represented by Ambedkar, Mahasabha represented by Savarkar, and Parsees represented by Cowasjee Jehangir¹ against any settlement which does not take full account of their interest and on which they are not consulted. I propose to have representatives of all four up here in the next four or five days and also to take advantage of the Chancellor's readiness to come and see me again.

My impression is still that while there is no real desire on the part of Congress to break, they may find themselves said that the withdrawal of Congress Ministries was the least the Congress could do; further action would depend wholly on Britain's handling of the crisis. 'The Congress has left the door open; it is for Britain to amend the mistake.' Both he and Jawaharlal Nehru reiterated the view that the communal differences were no obstacle to what the Congress wanted; they were being used as 'a bogey' (Gandhi) and 'a screen' (Nehru).

The Madras Premier hastened to be the first to act on the instructions of the Working Committee: the Ministry tendered its resignation on 27 October, and on 30 October the Governor of Madras took over the administration of the Province under section 93 of the Government of India Act. By the end of October the Ministries in Bihar, Bombay and the United provinces also had tendered their resignations; they were still in office at the end of the month, while the Governors enquired whether any alternative Ministries could command stable majorities in the Legislatures.

¹ Cowasji Jehangir, the grandson of Sir Cowasji Jehangir Readymoney, the first baronet of Bombay, is remembered as a Campaigner of Parsee community's prominent role in independent India. A former member of the Western Indian Liberation Federation, he became its President in 1936 and 1937. He was also active in Parsee Central Association and attended the Second Round Table Conference in 1930-32 to plead for the causes of his community. Even in 1945 on the eve of Indian independence, he pleaded with the Viceroy on behalf of the Parsee Central Association for according the Parsees a constitutionally privileged position

73. On Nehru and Rajendra Prasad: The Viceroy's impressions

Linlithgow to Zetland, 4 October 1939, Zetland Papers, Acc. No. 1972, NAI

[Extract]

... I am frankly very much disposed at the moment to think that Nehru is going to be the Chief nuisance in this business. I found him doctrinaire to a degree, with all the indifference of a man who has never had himself to carry the burden of administration to the importance of detail. Anyone, he seemed to think, could work out the details of the necessary scheme, and all that was required in his judgment was the broad outline a possible direction of progress or definition. Now that I have not the least doubt as to the strength of his personality and strength of his character, I confess to feeling some little hesitation as to the type of Prime Minister he might make for the United Provinces; though it I suppose always possible that the burden or work might lead him to a somewhat more realist conception of things generally. The nuisance of it is that he is much the strongest personality in the Committee, if we leave out Gandhi himself, and possible Patel (who, I would judge, is at the moment standing aside and watching the development of events), and while it might well have been possible to do some business with Rajendra Prasad, who is personally quite charming and struck me as being reasonable open-minded. I cannot see Rajendra Prasad really standing up effectively to the greater drive and energy of the younger men. And Gandhi having, with whatever hesitation as to the soundness of Nehru's policy, handed his mantle to Nehru, no doubt feels bound to go a very long way in supporting and advocating policies

commended by Nehru which would never have commended themselves to the old man himself had he still been in sole and effective charge.

As you will have gathered, I like Rajendra Prasad, though I had the feeling that he was not equal for the job of handling the business upon which we engaged. I was also most agreeably surprised by Patel with whom I had an amusing and very friendly conversation this morning. He struck me as very definitely the type of person with whom one could do business. He has a sense of humour, a very considerable shrewdness and a quick and active brain, in addition to, I should have thought, a strong and even somewhat dominating personality. But I could not of course cut across my discussions with Nehru and Rajendra Prasad: and I told him that as I had already made my views clear to them and to Gandhi, and as he had no doubt heard by now from both parties of the course which our conversations had taken, I did not propose to go over the ground with him again...

74. On Rajagopalachari's Views on India and the War

P.C. Joshi¹ to Jawaharlal Nehru, 5 October 1939, C. Rajagopalachari Papers (2), NMML

Dear Comrade,

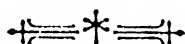
We are enclosing herewith a copy of a report from the *Indian Express*. The report speaks for itself and hardly needs any elucidation. We think that Rajaji by suggesting that we 'might even be required to assist Britain' and by threatening action against those who popularise the Haripura Resolution acted against the letter and spirit of the anti-war declaration of the Congress and against the statement on War issued by the Working Committee in its last meeting. We believe that till the Haripura resolution is rescinded it is the right and duty of every Congressman to take his stand on its basis and to popularize it. We believe that by threatening action under the Defence of India ordinance, action against anti-war propaganda can be taken only under the Ordinance which the Working Committee has unequivocally condemned, the Premier of Madras has lowered the Congress in the eyes of the people and has encouraged the bureaucracy.

We would also like to draw your attention to the fact that the *Nava Shakti*, from which Rajaji said 'he was seriously thinking of demanding security', is the organ of the Congress Socialist Party of Andhra and is addicted by Comrade P. Sundarayya,² a member of the AICC.

We would request you to take steps to acquaint the Congress Ministry of Madras with the implications of the statement of the Working Committee—particularly with regard to the operation of the Defence of India ordinance. We strongly feel that if the policy formulated by him is put into practice, the conflict within the Congress will sharpen, demoralization will ensue and the Congress will be seriously weakened—a development which at this critical juncture will be a calamity.

¹ P.C. Joshi (1907-78); One of the leading figures in India's communist movement; a theoretician and organizer; educated in Almora (UP); born in Allahabad; arrested in connection with the Meerut Conspiracy case; released in 1933; elected general secretary of the Communist Party in 1935; took an active part in the Trade Union and Kisan Sabha movements and worked in close cooperation with the left forces in the Congress in accordance with the strategy of the United Front at the Seventh Congress of the Communist International in 1935; expelled from the CPI in 1948; edited the *New Age* from 1957 to 1964. His wife Kalpana Dutta was a revolutionary and gained fame for her courage during the 'Chittagong Armoury Raid'.

² Puthala Palli Sundarayya (1913-87); a leading figure in the Communist movement; organizer of peasant struggles in Andhra Pradesh and of a powerful movement in Hyderabad against the Nizam's rule; founder of the Communist weekly organ, *Praja Sakthi*; member of the Rajya Sabha and leader of the Party; member of the Andhra Pradesh legislature from 1955 to 1967.



75. A Popular War must have Popular Support: Nehru

Cable to *News Chronicle*, London, 5 October 1939. China, Spain and the War, (Allahabad, 1940), pp. 177–81, *SWJN*, Vol. 10, pp. 168–70

5 October 1939

The spell of violence and inhuman warfare holds Europe and threatens the fabric of civilisation all over the world. Behind the clash of arms that is a deeper clash of ideas and aims and the future of the world hangs in the balance. History is being made not only on the battlefields but in the minds of men, and the vital question for all of us is whether that history is going to be different from that of past ages and whether this terrible war will make an essential difference to human freedom and end the very causes of war and human degradation. To India with her thirst for freedom and horror of war and violence, this question is of paramount importance. She has reacted strongly against the philosophy and methods of freedom and Nazi aggression and brutality and seen in them the negation of all she stands for. World peace for her means freedom and democracy and the ending of the domination of one nation over another. So India condemned aggression in Manchuria, Abyssinia, Czechoslovakia, and was deeply distressed at events in Spain and the brutal Nazi invasion of Poland. India will therefore gladly throw in her resources for a new order of peace and freedom.

If this kind of peace is the objective, then war and peace aims must be clearly defined and action today must conform to them. Not to do so or to hesitate is to demonstrate that there are no clear aims and what is said vaguely is not meant seriously; it is to justify apprehensions of all who have learnt from bitter experience that war overwhelms ideals and result in imperialisms fighting for mastery and entrenching themselves. If this war is for democracy and self-determination and against Nazi aggression, it cannot be fought for territorial annexations, indemnities or reparations, for keeping colonial peoples in subjection, and for maintaining the imperialist system.

For this urgent reason the Congress has invited the British Government to state its war and peace aims clearly and in particular how these apply to the imperialist order and to India. India can take no part in defending imperialism but she will join in a struggle for freedom. India's resources are vast but of even greater value is her goodwill and her moral support for a worthy cause. This is no small offer that India makes for it means the ending of a hundred years of hostility between India and England, a great turning point in world history and the real beginning of the new order we fight for. Only a free and equal India can cooperate of her free will in this task. Till that vital change is made none of us have the power to make the people of India enthusiastic for a war which is not theirs. A popular war must have popular support and people must realise what it means to them. An imposed war will inevitably be resented and rouse public feeling against it.

The whole background of generations of conflict and struggle for freedom in India must be borne in mind. Our present constitution itself has been imposed upon us and has kept hostility alive. This cannot go by vague assurances and half-hearted measures which will fail of their purpose. This historic opportunity must be seized by recognising India as a free nation with the right to draw up her constitution and her character of independence. Anything short of that will mean losing this opportunity and keeping alive the spirit of friction and hostility between India and England. It will mean that not only we in India but others doubt the sincerity of war and peace aims and there will be divergence between what is professed and what is done.

The first step must therefore be a declaration of India's full freedom. This has to be followed by its application now in so far as is possible in order to give the people effective control of the governance of India and the prosecution of war on India's behalf. Then only is it possible to create

the psychological conditions which can lead to popular support. Autocratic and ordinance rule will alienate public sympathy and lead to conflict. Already difficulties are arising, public workers have been arrested and severe restrictions placed on public and labour activities in some parts of India. This is the old way which has failed in the past and is bound to fail again.

India wants to forget the past of conflict and wants to stretch out her hand in comradeship. But she can do so only as a free nation on terms of equality. She must be convinced that the past is over and we are all striving for a new order not only in Europe but also in Asia and the world. Her invitation to the British Government is not only on her behalf but for all those in the world who believe in peace and freedom and democracy. It will be tragedy for all of us if the deep significance of this gesture is not appreciated and full response not made to it. Such a response will hearten people all over the world and will be a greater blow to Nazism than a victory on the battlefield.

76. India and War

Fortnightly Report for the second half of September, Home Department, File No. 18/9/1939, NAI

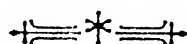
[Extracts]

Government of Madras
Public (General) Department
Fort St. George
6 October 1939

My dear Conran Smith,

The War—Public opinion generally continues to favour cooperation with Britain and France. Orthodox Congressmen are loyal to the Working Committee's resolution though some of them are inclined to favour what was publicly stated to be Mr Gandhi's personal view as distinguished from the Committee's. Many Muslim supporters of the Muslim League have also dissociated themselves from Mr Jinnah's statement. Congress Socialists, Communist and Forward Bloc supporters are still opposing participation in War, and advocating revolution/There have been far fewer speeches and wetting on these lines during the fortnight, and only in East Godavari, Madras city and Malabar was there any sustained activity. There were also a few anti-war speeches in Kistna, Guntur and Tanjore. The speeches have had very little effect on the public and in some cases have also met with a very poor response from the audience. Meetings and speeches in support of participation in War are far more numerous and more in accord with public sentiment. A feature of some of the late socialist speeches has been the attempt to justify Russia's invasion of Poland.

In a number of cases warning to local agitators by District Officers have had the effect of preventing the delivery of anti-war speeches. In the worst cases the Government have directed the issues of written warnings to offenders that further objectionable speeches will lead to prosecution under the Ordinance. In view of the fact that His Excellency the Viceroy is interviewing leaders of political parties and discussing the position, it has been thought on the whole better at present not to take drastic action in regard to speeches, which have had no appreciable effect on any body...



77. On Gandhi: The Viceroy's Impressions

Linlithgow to Zetland, 7 October 1939, Zetland Papers, Acc. No. 1972, NAI

By far the most interesting development, of course, has been Gandhi's very frank confession to me of his future intentions as described in my note of interview with him.¹ I had been feeling for some time past that it is quite likely that he might, as I had said in my last letter, be allowing the young men to have their run, with a view to intervening himself at a later stage. He declared, as usual, that he is an isolate individual with no authority or power, and that he cannot, of course, guarantee that anybody will follow him. He may be right, but I should be very surprised if he was. My own anticipation would be that if he does decide to take the line that he has indicated, he would be likely after a greater or less interval to attract very substantial support from the Right Wing of Congress, and in particular from President such as Rajendra Prasad, Rajagopalachari, Patel and those who are of that way of thinking. If I entertain the least doubt in the matter, it is only because there is always the risk that these continued decisions of fundamental importance representing as they do a *volt face* or divergence from the line that he has been pursuing, may be regarded as weakening to some extent his power and authority. What line, of course, he may finally decide to take, or what is likely to be his advise to Ministries, it is impossible to guess, and I deliberately did not press him.

His attitude remains a complete secret here, and no hint of it has so far got abroad to the best of my knowledge. The general impression which I myself have, as I continue this stream of interviews,² is more and more strongly that there is no basis for agreement between the communities and the political interests with which we are dealing; that there is very clear realisation on both sides of what is involved in declarations of freedom, immediate Dominion Status, Dominion Status after the war, and the like; and that it is for these reasons that Congress are anxious to push on and the Muslims and certain of the other minorities to hold back. The more I think of it the more I am disposed to the view that if we are fortunate, we may be able to get round this corner, no doubt to the accompaniment of a good deal of grumbling, at the cost of declaration of a type which you and I have discussed by telegrams, which would arbitrate our former undertakings, and that His Majesty's Government were prepared to reconsider the position at the end of the war, and indicate also clearly that agreement between those concerned must be a precondition of the changes in the Act at that stage for a further advance.

¹ The interviews took place on 5 October 1939.

² The Viceroy had meetings with 52 leaders and representatives of various groups and parties.

78. Non-Congress Advices on War

Viceroy to Secretary to State (Tel.), 10 October 1939; Enclosure 1, Linlithgow Papers, Acc. No. 2335, NAI

Following are main points, which have emerged from my recent conversations:

- (a) *Sikander*: Opposed to expansion of Executive Council. He takes the view that there will be no chance of holding an expanded body together. Strongly in favour of a Defence Liaison Group whether Congress are prepared to cooperate or not, and indeed more particularly if they are not, since this would tend to knit together the non-Congress elements working on it. He is not apprehensive that a body of this nature might work its way into the Constitution so long as the Governors-General is the only connection with Departments

and keeps a firm hand over its proceedings. As regards Muslim complaints in the minority provinces, he assured me that Jinnah realised very well the limitations of the extent to which I could interfere.

- (b) *Nawab Ismail Khan*: President, United Provinces Muslim League—My declaration should make it clear that democratic system at the Centre is not acceptable to the Muslim community. Congress claim to speak for India and to control Defence is perfectly inadmissible. Any declaration must include specific assurances to the Muslims that their claims and rights would not be left at the mercy of a communal majority. Wholly opposed to an All-parties Conference which would merely result in an additional dogfight. Communal situation in his judgment worse than he had ever known it not merely between the communities but between man and man even in the upper classes.
- (c) *Savarkar*, President Hindu Mahasabha—His Majesty's Government must now turn to the Hindus and work their support. We had differed in the past, but our interests were now identical and we must work together. Mahasabha favoured unambiguous undertaking of Dominion Status at the end of the war, though they challenged the Congress claim to represent anything except Congress and were waiting to supplant them. As regards effective implementation of any declaration, Mahasabha had a list of possible members of a Cabinet in the event of our declaration taking that form. Pakistan was a wholly abominable idea; but its significance from Muslim point of view or the depth of Muslim feeling in support of it which he believed to be growing should not be minimized. In reply to suggestion by me that so far as the future was concerned, it was no good our having a patched-up peace at the top without a corresponding reaction in the provinces, he replied that the communal position in the provinces would remain as at present whatever we might say or do. He cross-examined me closely as to what would happen in a section 93 situation, and was clearly anxious to keep the door open for appointment of advisers from the Mahasabha at whatever risk to the future political careers of individuals so selected. He was very emphatic as to Mahasabha refusal to accept Congress as their mouthpiece, and as to their readiness and desire to supplant Congress if possible. He was as anti-Muslim as one would have anticipated.
- (d) *Ambedkar*: Depressed classes had suffered more than they were now suffering from the Congress, and they were now being subjected to organised persecution designed to drive his community politically so far as possible into the Congress camp. Since 1934–35 he had changed his views, and had now reached the conclusion that the parliamentary system on the British model would not do in India. He would be perfectly ready to say so in public with the utmost emphasis. He was 100 per cent opposed to self-government at the Centre and would resist it in any possible way. As regards Liaison, he favoured a consultative group, but was most strongly opposed to an All Parties Conference since there would be no hope of our being able to do business at one owing to the dissensions that would arise. He was equally opposed to an expanded Executive Council which he thought would never work together, and he begged that no responsibility should be given at the Centre, but that whatever organisation we might devise should be consultative in character only.
- (e) *The Jam Saheb*: The Jam Saheb gave me every assurance of support. The Princes will attend any conference which I may wish to call. They would be, so far as he could judge, wholly opposed to any proposal for conferment of self-government of British India, and would resist any proposal to remove the Governor-General's control over External Affairs and Defence. He did not himself see how Dominion Status or any such could be conferred

until unity, i.e. Federation of some sort, had been achieved. The princely order would want to know what sort of Federation was to be the prelude to the Conferment of Dominion Status before they could consider any such proposal. He was definitely against an All-parties Conference, and in favour of a broadly based consultative group, to be presided over by the Governor-General who should be the only connection between the Committee and the executive. He was disposed to think that voting would merely result in friction. He saw no objection to a declaration by the Governor-General provided that it was made clear in that all other parties including the Princes and the principal minorities had been consulted and their views taken account of in framing any scheme for constitutional advance. He was opposed to any expansion of the Governor-General's Council as a means of conferring a further measure of self-government. I told him that I saw no objection to his putting the standing Committee in the picture as he had gathered it from me.

79. Congress and the War

Linlithgow to Roger Lumlay, 8 October 1939, Linlithgow Papers, Acc. No. 2339, NAI

In every Congress Province the position is, I think the same as you report, viz., that the essential matter has been, and remains, the question whether, and if so to what extent, the Congress is prepared to cooperate in the prosecution of the war. I am, as before, most grateful to you for keeping me in touch with local opinion and local reactions. I have, as you will have seen, extended my political contacts very widely indeed—so widely as to include Subhas Bose, and in begin to feel much more confident as to the general trend of opinion. But the outcome remains quite uncertain.

2. As I mentioned, I found Nehru entirely impervious to reason; and I doubt if we can do business on the sort of line he would like to see adopted. My general impression is that the differences between communities is as deep and fundamental as ever, and that the prospects of our being able to make any widely-phrased v, which would meet with general agreement, are extremely remote. I should be very much surprised if assuming there is to be a v, we can go much beyond a reaffirmation of existing pledges, possibly indicating that parliament would be prepared to review the situation in regard to the Act in the light of circumstances existed at the end of the war, and possibly also indicating that agreement among those affected must be a condition for such changes as might be advocated, or of further constitutional advance. It is all very well talking in general terms about freedom and about the desirability of giving pledges that Dominion Status will be introduced immediately on the conclusion of hostilities or the like, but those broadly expressed phrases ignore the fact that the issues of defence, of control at the centre, and of recruitment are of the utmost importance to the Muslims as well as to the princes, and that once we get down to the business of distribution of authority, the Muslim, unless I am very much mistaken, will fight to the death rather than surrender control to the Hindu Majority. I have been greatly impressed too by the emphasis which has been laid by Muslim leaders on the necessity of specific protection for Muslim minorities in provinces in which Hindus are in a majority and for some general understanding that what are loosely called 'Muslim grievances' shall be redressed. Nor is the general position eased by the multitude of claims which I am now receiving from all sorts of parties and interests to be separately considered and not to be included under the Congress umbrella—the Liberals, the Scheduled Castes, and the Hindu Mahasabha—to mention only a few. However, I am not without hope that this is proving an exceptionally difficult corner to

negotiate and though the position is not necessarily eased by the fact, which one has also to bear in mind at all times, that the last word rests with parliament and with the Cabinet, who are naturally, likely to expect a pretty decisive case for any proposals put to them.

This business of Anti-war agitation is rather a problem in other provinces as well as in Bombay, and I went so far to discuss it, with specific references to the United Provinces,¹ with Gandhi, who I found quite understanding. It is, of course a great nuisance, and the Chief is a good deal perturbed about its effects in certain areas. But I feel no doubt that the course of wisdom is to go slow, even at the risk of misunderstanding and of some damage, until we have got the main constitutional business settled. All that worries me is the Right Wing, even if, as I would like to hope, they now do reach an agreement with us, should find the task of keeping the Left Wing in order (or alternatively to unpleasantness of putting the Left Wing in jail) too great a strain to stand up to subsequently.

On 5 September, in an interview with Gandhi, the Viceroy expressed his uneasiness at the political atmosphere in U.P, especially the anti-war speeches by Shibban Lal Saxena and other Congress leaders.

80. India and the War: Communist Draft Resolution

National Front, Vol. 2, No. 39, 8 October 1939

8 October 1939

Comrades R.D. Bharadwaj,¹ Somnath Lahiri,² Bankim Mukerji¹ and S.G. Sardesai¹ gave notice of the following resolution on for the AICC session held at Wardha on the 9th October and following days:

The AICC has carefully considered the statements of the British Premier on Britain's war aims and has taken note of the attitude adopted by the Secretary of State for India and the Viceroy on the last statement of the Working Committee laying down India's position vis à-vis the present war.

The AICC deplores that the British Government both in England and in India, notwithstanding their democratic protestations have promulgated emergency war measures which have instituted a fascist regimentation of public life suppressing freedom of press, speech and association.

The British Government have promulgated Ordinances, passed the Government of India Act Amendment Bill and taken other far-reaching measures which affect the Indian people vitally and circumscribe and limit the powers and activities of the provincial governments.

The Government has used the Ordinance to completely suppress all normal political activity and the press especially in the Punjab and in Bengal, to make numerous arrests of political workers and in one case to ruthlessly suppressed the just economic struggle of the workers (at Digboi).

The Government have now placed on the Statute Book the Defence of India Act embodying all the provisions of the Ordinances in the face of the known disapproval of the Congress MLS's and the protest of the other elected members of the Central Assembly.

The Government through its day-to-day war measures regarding the appropriation of Indian resources for war ends, the transfer of Indian Troops abroad etc. is committing India to a policy which she is not a party and of which, she disapproves.

In view of these developments and in view of the attitude adopted by the British Government on the last Working Committee statement on war the India National Congress declares:

That the Indian people will not participate in the present war which they are convinced is being fought by Britain to defend the Imperialist status quo and to consolidate Imperialism in India and elsewhere.

That while Congress abhors both fascism and imperialism and supports the fight for world Democracy it is the free Indian nation that alone can determine what our policy in a war shall be. When freedom is achieved the Congress will place its own point of view before the free nation but till then it cannot support the war in anyway.

That nothing can convince the Indian people that the present war is being fought for democracy as long as Ordinances and Defence of India Act and other war measures continue to strangle the normal political life and civil liberties of the Indian people as long as her right to self determination and complete independence is not conceded, as long as immediate steps are not taken to enforce that right through measures which ensure full popular control by the Indian people of their Army, the industrial and economic development of the country and foreign policy.

The AICC therefore adopts the following programme of actions:

1. The Ministries must refuse to submit to the restrictions imposed by the Ordinance, and by the Defence of India Act, must refuse to assist in war measures and actively non-co-operate in war preparations and face dismissal.
2. The campaign of mass resistance against war measures would be inaugurated by an All-India Day of Protest (strike and hartal) against Imperialism War; against Ordinance and other imposed war measures. On this day, we declare our sympathy with the Polish people condemn Chamberlain's and Hitler's policy which led to war administration appeal to the British and French peoples to convert this imperialist war into a war to end both imperialism and fascism.
3. Boycott of British goods.
4. Resistance to the curtailment of the freedom of press, organisation and association, through the Ordinances and the Defence of India Act.
5. Resumption of struggle for democracy in the States.
6. Mass campaign to stop transfer of men, money and material for the imperialist war.

The AICC authorizes the Working Committee to appoint a broad Council of Action which would be to take all measures to inaugurate, organise and carry through the campaign, to guide and lead the provincial committees and Councils of Action and to take all precautions ensuring the fullest unity and discipline within the organisation and enlisting the support and cooperation of Labour and Kisan organisations.

¹ R.D. Bharadwaj (1908–98) became a Communist leader; he became the member of Polit Bureau of the Communist Party of India in 1934; associated with Cawnpore Mill Workers Association during 1937–39; he played a very important role in the Cawnpore Trade Union Movement; he was associated with All India Kisan Sabha for a very long time as an underground Communist leader; he used to write in *Congress Socialist* and *New Age*.

² Sonmath Lahiri graduate of Calcutta University; active in the trade-union movement in that city, elected to the CPI Central Committee in 1943, to the Calcutta Municipal Corporation in 1944, and to the Constituent Assembly in 1946; served on the Central Committee until 1951; in 1956, after an absence, he was again elected to the West Bengal Provincial Committee of the CPI; elected to the West Bengal Legislative Assembly in 1957, where he sits as a Communist member.

³ Bankim Mukherjee (1897–1961); educated at Presidency College, Calcutta; entered politics and trade-union work in the 1920s; active in the Civil Disobedience Movement and in jute-workers' strikes in Bengal; joined the CPI in 1936 and was elected to the Bengal legislative assembly in 1937; served on the CPI's Bengal Provincial Committee but never on the central Committee; active in kisan work, and has been both President and general secretary of the AIKS; elected to the West Bengal legislative assembly in 1952 and 1957.

*S.G. Sardesai (1907–1996); active in the Indian National Congress in the 1940's, he was one of the eight Communists expelled from the AICC in 1945; a leading trade unionist in Bombay, and secretary of the Mill Mazdoor Union; served on the CPI Central Committee from 1943 to 1950 and from 1953 to the present; active in the agitation for the liberation of Goa from Portuguese rule.

81. Delay Means Death

Editorial, *National Front*, Vol. 2, No. 39, 8 October 1939

8 October 1939

On the 7th October the All-India Congress Committee will meet at Wardha. The central issue before the session will be the attitude that the Congress should adopt towards the war.

By then more than a month will have passed since the outbreak of war, and since the promulgation of the Ordinance, establishing a virtual war dictatorship of the British Government. During this whole one month, while anti-war meetings and demonstrations have taken place in every part of the country, no lead has been forthcoming from the national leadership beyond representative-formulation of the War policy of the Congress and exhortation to the people 'to keep in readiness'. No directions have been given as to what the people are to do today and what steps are to be taken by the Congress organisation. The result has been that the Congress as an organisation is as unprepared to meet the crisis today, as it was one-month back when war began. The anti-war feeling, which has rapidly grown among the broad masses, has been due almost entirely to local initiative, to the efforts of individual Congressmen, of Socialists and Communists, of Trade Unions and Kisan Sabhas. Meanwhile, in non-Congress provinces, action under the ordinance has already been taken against a number of Socialists, Communists and Left Congressmen, even the Congress Province of Assam, the Ordinance has been used to crush the heroic strike of the Digboi Workers.

The suspense is fast reaching breaking point. Why this deadly? Why no call for action or even specific directions for preparation? These are questions being asked from all sides.

The meeting of the Working Committee which took place at Wardha between the 7th and the 14th September after protracted deliberations decided to postpone decision on the issue of war and a statement was issued clarifying the Congress position on War and asking the British Government to define its war aims. The statement correctly formulates the policy of the Congress and declared the determination of the Congress to be no party to an imperialist war. Consistent with the policy formulated in the statement, the call should have been issued for nationwide demonstrations against ordinance Raj and against the forcible imposition of war on India. The disciplinary action against Bose and other leftists should have been withdrawn, complete unity restored and the Congress placed on a fighting basis. That was not done. The initiative rested with imperialism. The move for compromise has already been made.

This contradiction between the declaration and the action of the national leadership was not accidental. A formula was sought to be evolved which, while bringing pressure on imperialism, left the door open for compromise and which could, at the same time, maintain the unity of the Congress—unity not for immediate action but for waiting and watching. The conflict between the forces of struggle and compromise which has left its imprint on every major resolution of the Congress during the last three years, divergence between theory and practice, a correct formulation of policy without action to carry out that policy, was sharply expressed in the statement issued by the Working Committee.

But in the background of the ever-deepening war crisis, this failure of the Working Committee to give a positive lead, this leaving of the initiative in the hands of imperialism, its policy of 'wait

and see' must, if pursued longer, prove disastrous for the future of our national movement. Every day of inaction today is a day lost. An opportunity that comes only once in a decade may be wasted and the nation may find itself helpless in the near future. In the atmosphere of stagnation and inaction, forces of compromise—compromise today can mean nothing short of surrender—are bound to gain strength and pave the way to ignoble capitulation. That would mean the Congress being satisfied with 'reforms', Congress Ministries operating the Ordinance and suppressing popular movements, the Congress cooperating with imperialism in the prosecution of war. That cannot but lead to disruption of the Congress, widespread demoralization and ultimate defeat.

The time factor has assumed decisive importance to-day. We have to choose and choose at once. There can be no marking time. Delay means death.

This is no-groundless apprehension. Big business industrialists, assured of boom conditions ahead would bring pressure on the Congress not to create political crises. Within the Congress there are forces—powerful sections in the Congress Cabinets—that are opposed to struggle. Gandhiji's line of unconditional cooperation with imperialism in the prosecution of war, while it has no supporters even in your Working Committee, is bound to influence large sections against the policy of resistance. The pressure of the compromisers would become irresistible leading to disruption of the Congress unless the decision to resist war is taken immediately, and active steps taken to give effect to that decision.

Those who think that because of international difficulties, imperialism would itself agree to part with power and grant India freedom are deluding themselves. So are those who are thinking in terms of bargaining. The war crisis affords us an opportunity which would be wasted unless a proper decision is taken immediately.

The AICC must decide to wait no longer for a 'gesture' from imperialism, but immediately evolve a plan to enforce the National Demand. It must resolutely turn its face away from bargaining. The Congress policy, representative-iterated by the Working Committee is clear and unequivocal. It lays down that the free Indian people alone can participate in a war for freedom and democracy and until the Indian people are free to determine their own foreign policy and can act as a free nation, they would resist every attempt to utilise their resources for Britain's war. Any deviation from this policy, any cooperation with the war measures would be nothing short of betrayal. Mere withdrawal of the Ministries would not amount to the fight for freedom. On the contrary, occupying strategic positions in the Government, the Ministries must be called upon to resist the operation of the Ordinance and face dismissal at the hands of the Governors.

The call must go forth from the AICC for one day nation-wise demonstration against Ordinance Raj. Immediate steps must be taken to ensure unity of action between the States Peoples organisation and the Congress. Congress organisations must be directed to work in closest cooperation with the Kisan Sabhas, Trade Unions, Students Unions.

This must be the decision of the AICC—no more waiting. No postponement of decision, no cooperation in imperialist war, nation-wide struggle for freedom must be launched!

82. Congress and War

M.N. Roy submitted this resolution to the AICC meeting held at Wardha on 9 October 1939, *Independent India*, 8 October 1939

8 October 1939

The AICC welcomes the decisive arrest of Nazi aggression towards the East by quick action on the part of the Government of the USSR. The deliberate plan to destroy the independence of the

all States of Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, or to reduce them to vassalage was the most virulent form of Hitlerism in foreign politics. Recent military and diplomatic actions of the Soviet Government have completely frustrated this plan. That being the case, German Nazism and international Fascism have received a definite setback, though the so called democratic Powers of the West have so far contributed absolutely nothing to this end.

Therefore, The AICC categorically disapproved of continued destruction of life and property in the west on the pretext of ending Hitlerism. If the war continues, in addition to the useless massacre on the battle fronts, the masses of the German civil population will also be starved to death by economic blockade. India cannot be a party to such a senseless vendetta.

Therefore, the AICC resolves that it has ceased to be a question of India's cooperation in the war, and appeals to the British and French peoples to prevail upon their Governments to conclude this war which has served absolutely no useful purpose.

The AICC is further of the opinion that recent events have proved that, in order to keep German Nazism and international Fascism in check, and to free Europe completely from this danger as soon as possible, the cooperation of the USSR is the most important factor, and hopes that with that cooperation peace will be representative-established on the basis of new international relations.

83. Popular Movement Grows

National Front, 8 October 1939

8 October 1939

Although the Congress has as yet taken no steps towards a co-ordinated and nation-wide campaign the anti-imperialist temper of the people against the crushing restrictions is manifesting itself all over the country.

The following are the beginnings of the new democratic movement of the people in the present acute crisis:

Madras: The Town Youth League during the National Struggle Week¹ led a procession and held a meeting in which amongst other resolutions the meeting of citizens called upon the public not to accord any resistance to the war preparations of imperialist-minded countries.

Bihar: A huge mass meeting attended by folk from the adjoining villages and from Dalmianagar was held on the 7th September at Delhi. Resolutions on non-participation of India in the war and for struggle for freedom, for a reduction of the prices and foodstuffs and daily necessities and on provision of a war allowance of 25 per cent for all employees in factories and offices were passed.

Sind: The first fortnight of September was a period of great effort by the CSP at Karachi. A number of meetings were held every day, mostly in the working class creates enlightening the workmen on the present war situation and explaining to them the Congress attitude and resolutions on war. On Sunday, the 8th September a grand popular rally was organised in the Khalikdina Hall in which some Congressmen, hitherto tied to the Rightists, also participated. The resolution of the last imperialist war of 1914 is not being fought for the principles of justice and democracy, as claimed by the British Government.

On the 12th September the Kanchhore Liners Ward Congress Committee held a protest meeting over the Karachi arrests (see above) under the Ordinance. On the night of the 13th there was a labour demonstration attended by over 2000 workers.

Central Provinces: On the third day of the National Struggle week at Amraoti, the Left Consolidation² observed the anti-war-day under its auspices. In a mammoth meeting the people

were exhorted to support the Congress in its resolutions on foreign policy passed in Haripura and Tripuri and to give a call to the nation to launch an offensive against the British Government.

Punjab: In a speech before a large gathering of the citizens of Sargodha on September 10, Prof Ranga¹ MLA (Central), said 'The fact that presents are prepared to offer themselves for recruitment in such large numbers demonstrates their terrible poverty and growing unemployment. If they are willing to risk death on order to assure themselves of some temporary employment and some sort of fortune to their families, surely they must be much more enthusiastic to place themselves at the disposal of our nation if only our fight for Swaraj can give them a reasonable assurance of political and social freedom and independence to them and their future generation.

Bengal: In Connection with National Struggle Week at Chittagong, Barisal and PO Dhaghat (Chittagong) meetings held under the auspices of the Communists, Socialists and Congressmen, the Congress and the people were exhorted to stand by the Haripura Resolution of the Congress on War.

Assam: A meeting of the Sunamganj public held on the 2nd September called upon the Congress Working Committee not to allow India to be dragged into imperialist Quarrels. It expressed warm sympathies for the peoples of China and all other weak and small nations and against fascism and extended its greetings to all popular forces working for peace and democracy.

¹ The National Struggle Week was organised from 6 to 13 April as a nation-wide campaign against the imperialist war.

² The Left Consolidation Committee was formed in June 1939 by Subhas Bose to consolidate the Leftists and intensify the struggle for independence. The committee included members of the Congress Socialist Party, the National Front, the Radical Democratic Party and the Forward Bloc.

³ Nidubrolu Gogineni Ranga (b 1900) educated in the school and college in Guntur district; joined the Oxford University in 1920 and was influenced by Fabian Socialists like G.D.H. Cole; taught history at Pachaiyappa College in Madras; plunged into the peasant movement in the aftermath of the Bardoli satyagraha; President of the Andhra Pradesh Congress in association with Rajaji in 1959 and was its leader in Parliament; rejoined the Congress in 1973.

84. M.N. Roy to CEC Members

M.N. Roy Papers Microfilm Roll No. 9. F. No. LRC/5/11, NMML

8 October 1939

Dear Comrades,

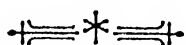
A meeting of the Central Executive Committee of the LRC will be held here on the 15 inst and the following days. Among other things, it will endorse the statement recently issued by the CEC which met at Bombay. Since that meeting was held in a hurry, the attendance was not very large. Opinions of the absent members were sought through correspondence. The majority has expressed agreement. But some clarification. Therefore, the document will be discussed against and, if necessary amended. In order to have our position democratically determined, it is desired that leading comrades not on the CEC as well as Provincial Committees should send in their opinions. You are hereby requested to comply with the request and send a statement so that it reaches here by the 14th.

Before expressing your definite opinion and making recommendations about our activities in the present situation, personally, I would advise you to have the following considerations in view.

1. So long as the war is against Hitlerism, no matter whatever may be the motive of British Imperialism, we cannot have any objection to India participating in it. Indeed, it is the duty of all socialists and communists to help such war.

2. War resistance is only a propagandist slogan. For the moment, there is no power in India which can effectively prevent British Imperialism exploiting the resources and man power in India for the war. As a matter of fact, India is already involved in the war. No resistance is possible, because those who will be directly involved in the war are eager to do so. Recruitment cannot be prevented so long as there are thousands and thousands of unemployed; but merchants and industrialists who are really the power behind the present leadership of the Congress, will make enormous profit out of the war; therefore, they want the war rather than to resist it. Congress policy will be determined by that factor. It is already determined. Congress is already cooperating with the British Government in prosecuting the war. All the so-called left-wing groups have wholeheartedly endorsed the statement of the Working Committee. Consequently, any talk of resistance is willful deception.
3. The Congress, having decided to cooperate, only there is still to be some agreement about terms, there can be no mass resistance. The 'Forwarded Bloc' bluff should not be taken seriously. It is no revolutionary tactics to court arrest by making some flamboyant speeches. The war will not be resisted by our going to jail.
4. To resist war as a matter of principle is not revolutionary tactics, but pacifism. Besides, India's participation in the war cannot in any way do great harm to India. As a matter of fact, certain classes of the population will be benefited.
5. Assuming that even an effective resistance could be organised, that would hardly improve the future of the anti-imperialist struggle, because resistances will be met with such a fierce repression as would crush and demoralize the movement.
6. So far, resistance has been visualized only as satyagraha, which is not a revolutionary method of struggle, and is bound to lead to a compromise. Revolutionaries need not go to jail for such reformist policy, which only serve the purpose of those who are seeking compromise.
7. The real danger is the possibility of the present war developing into a war against the Soviet Union. The Indian capitalists and their political spokesmen even in the Congress would like the war to take that turn. Because only in that case, India can play an active part in the war. The British can attack the Soviet Union only from the Near-Eastern countries; the military operations there must be dependent on supply exclusively from India. That would give the Indian merchants and industrialists the time of their life. Therefore, even today the Congress press is carrying on a fierce anti Russian propaganda.
8. Our revolutionary duty is first to head off that danger by vigorously counteracting the anti-Russian propaganda in the Congress press, and mobilizing the rank and file opinion in favour of peace, and explaining to them the real significance of the present policy of the Soviet Union; and secondly, to prepare ourselves for decisive action in case of the danger becoming real. Therefore, for the moment, we should not expose ourselves in any risk, so that we can gather strength and prepare the ground for some effective action when it will be warranted.

For these considerations, I am decidedly of the opinion that we should not be stampeded to any useless spectacular performance by the fear of the criticism of arm-chair radicals. We shall determine our policy by our own understanding of the situation, and in the light of our perspective, irrespective of whatever others may say.



85. Under Ordinance Raj

National Front, 8 October 1939

8 October 1939

India has been overtaken by the acute world crisis. With every passing hour the crisis is being reflected more and more sharply inside our own country. The first skirmishes in the coming fight on a nationwide scale for the complete emancipation of our people or for a defeat greater for us than that of the late imperialist war period, are already taking place. Imperialism and its henchmen have taken the initiative while the democratic forces are still halting and hesitant before them. Nowhere up to now is this fact more manifest than on the front of the civil liberties and democratic rights of the people. All the gains of the people in the past two years under the Congress Ministries are being negated and the same time the whole country is being rapidly bound hand and foot for any and every purpose that may serve the interests of British Imperialism.

The most outstanding attack, one which is destroying every vital function of the democratic organisations of the people, the Congress, the Trade Unions, Kisan Sabhas, Students Bodies, is the Defence of India Ordinance promulgated by the Viceroy on the 3rd September followed up by the Defence of India Bill which has been passed by the Central Legislative a caricature of itself with the Congress Party abstaining.

The salient points in the Defence of India Ordinance are:

(a) Prohibition of 'Prejudicial Acts', 'Prejudicial Act' means any act which is (among other things) intended or is likely:

- i. to prejudice His Majesty's relations with any Indian State or with any foreign Power;
- ii. to bring into hatred or contempt or to excite disaffection towards His Majesty or the Government established by law in British India or in any other part of His Majesty's dominions.
- iii. to promote feelings of enmity and hatred between different classes of His Majesty's subjects;
- iv. to cause fear or alarm to the public or to any section of the public in a manner likely to be prejudicial to the defence of British India or to the efficient prosecution of the war.

(b) Prohibition of 'Prejudicial report', 'Prejudicial report' means any report statement of visible representation, whether true or false, which, or the publishing of which, is, or is an incitement to the commission of, a prejudicial act as defined in the rules (see above).

All political workers must study the whole Defence of India Ordinance in order to be able to show concretely to the people how it empowers the authorities to smother every form of civil liberty and political activity and completely violates the freedom of the Press. In this latter connection, Press Censors have been appointed everywhere to control press reports and comments.

The following are instance of attack, growing more wide spread every day, on Civil Liberties:

Bengal

Government Notification: All Public processions, meetings or assemblies held for the furtherance of discussion of any subject which is likely to affect prejudicially the public safety, the defence of British India, or the public order and tranquility have been prohibited by a notification in the Calcutta Gazette Extraordinary.

The notification lays down that no public procession, meeting or discussion on any subject pertaining to the above may take place without a written notice of the intention being given at least three days previously and may be held only after a written permission from the District Magistrate or Commissioner of Police, Calcutta, and strictly on their conditions. Further, police officers have

the right to be present for the purpose of taking reports. This order is to remain in force for six months.

Chittagong: The Editor of *Adhikar*, a Socialist weekly in Bengali was warned by the Dist. Magistrate for publishing in his paper of the 2nd September a comment on the nations struggle against war and for an Editorial on the 9th September. The *Adhikar* has been forced to close down, unable to meet a demand for a security of Rs 1000 when it published two life sketches of Comrades Ananta Singh and Ganesh Ghosh. But these comrades of the *Adhikar* are not to be muzzled. A fresh weekly new and cultural weekly named 'Sangram' (struggle) is to be started soon.

Comilla: The District Magistrate at Comilla, which is a nerve centre of the peasant movement of the Province, has promulgated an order throughout the district prohibiting meetings, processions and demonstrations likely to disturb the public tranquility during War.

Faridpur: On the 5th September, the room of Mr Bangala Guha and another house, the residence of an activist of the Students Federation, were searched. Papers concerning the Dist. Krishak Samity and some Socialist Literature were taken away.

Daulatpur (Khulna): News from this place indicated that an order similar to the one in Comilla has been promulgated by the District Magistrate.

Chandpur: The District Magistrate of Tipperah has taken similar action here on September 8.

Calcutta: Mr Soumyendranath Tagore with 6 others were arrested on the 20th September, under the Defence Ordinance. They are alleged to have committed a 'Prejudicial Act' by printing and publishing a pamphlet entitled 'Imperialist war and India'. The police searched Tagore's residence and the premises of the Ganavani Publishing House.

The special Branch, Calcutta, carried out three more searches at the houses of Sudhir Das Gupta, Secretary, Bengal Kisan Sabha, Mr Bihoy Dutta, Editor, Chittarabani and the office of the South Calcutta Vanguard Club. They took away copies of 'Spain' and 'Why we are anti war' from the above places. 300 copies of a book 'Bourgeois Democratic Revolution and India' by Soumyen Tagore were seized by the Special Branch Police after a search of Mr Provat Sen.

Malda: Three Kisan leaders have been placed under arrest under the Defence Ordinance.

Assam

Dighboi Oil fields: A Simla Communique of Government has declared the Digboi Oilfields in Assam a 'protected area' under the Defence of India ordinance. Thus at a stroke the 1000 or so workers, who have been engaged in a life and death strike struggle for about six months now, have been cut off from outside succour at a most critical stage of their fight for their rights.

And the following eight persons have been extended from the Dibrugarh Sub Division under the same measure: Mohammed Ahmad Chowdhury, Sabhu Singh, Mohammed Wafi, Aswini Kumar Chakrabarty, Jagannath Upadhyaya, Syed Asghar Hussain, Mohammed Siddique and Amarnath Tewari.

Sudhindu Pramanick, labour leader of Calcutta, has also been arrested Gauhati after having been extended previously.

Multan: Three office-bearers of the Majlis-i-Ahrar have been arrested under Sec. 38 of the Ordinance.

A prominent Congress leader and three others have also been arrested under Sec. 107 and 144 CrPCC for speeches at the Khenewal Political Conference presided over by Maiz i ftikhar-uddin, MLA (Punjab).

Lyallpur: A blind Ahrar leader and one other were arrested for speeches at the Ahrar Conference held at Tandlinavala on September 16.

Kangra: Pandit Bhagat Ram, MLA (Punjab) has been arrested under Sec 38 of the Defence Ordinance.

Rawalpindi: Maulana Inayat Mohammed Pasruri, President, Majlisi-Ahrar was arrested on September 15 under the Ordinance for distributing copies of the resolution of the National Executive of the AICSP on War.

Mr Hari Singh was convicted on September 19 for a charge under Rule 38 of the Ordinance for a speech against recruitment on September 5, Hiranpundi village to 18 months rigorous imprisonment.

Sind

Karachi: Mr Ghulam Ali, Secretary of the Provincial Trade Union Congress has been sentenced to one year's simple imprisonment on a charge under Rule 34 of the Ordinance. Similarly Mr Kazi Mujtaba, a Socialist, was arrested on September 13 under the Ordinance for a speech against India's participation in war.

United Provinces

Unao: Messrs Balgangadhar Tripathi, S.K. Misra, S.N. Ganguli, Nand Kishore and Babulal were arrested for the alleged issuing of a pamphlet in connection with recruitment into the army and for asking peasants not to pay rents to Zamindars who render pecuniary help to the British for the prosecution of the war.

Bareilly: Seth Damodar Swarup, Secretary of the UPCCSP, has been warned by the District Magistrate not to do or preach anything which might hamper recruitment.

Bombay

The Editor of the *Janmabhumi*, a Gujarati daily, was served with a notice on the 22nd September by the Special Branch of the Bombay CID under the Defence of India Ordinance.

86. AICC Resolution of War

CWMG, Vol. 70, pp. 413-14

10 October 1939

The declaration of war in Europe has created an international situation of the gravest import to the world and to India, and the AICC, charged with the heavy responsibility of guiding the people of India in this moment of world crisis, has sought guidance from the principles and declarations of the Congress in considering this grave situation. The Congress has been guided throughout but its objective of achieving the independence of the Indian people and the establishment of a free democratic State in India wherein the rights and interests of all minorities are preserved and safeguarded. The means it has adopted in its struggles and activities have been peaceful and legitimate, and it has looked upon war and violence with horror and as opposed to progress and civilisation. In particular, the Congress has declared itself opposed to all imperialist war and to the domination of one country over another.

In spite of the repeated declarations of the Congress in regard to war, the British Government have declared India a belligerent country without the consent of the Indian people and various far-reaching measures have been hurried through the legislatures and promulgated in the form of ordinance, vitally affecting them and circumscribing and limiting the powers of the Provincial Government.

The AICC, however, does not wish to take any final decision precipitately and without giving every opportunity from the war and peace aims of the British Government to be clarified, with particular reference to India. The committee approves of and endorses the statement issued by the Working Committee on September 14, 1939, on the war crisis, and repeats the invitation contained therein to the British Government to state their war and peace aims.

While the Committee condemns Fascism and Nazi aggression, it is convinced that peace and freedom can only be established and preserved by an extension of democracy to all colonial countries and by the application of the principle of self-determination to them so as to eliminate imperialist control. In particular, India must be declared an independent nation, and at present application must be given to this status to the largest possible extent. The AICC earnestly trusts that this declaration will be made by the British Government in any statement that it may make in regard to its war and peace aims.

The Committee desires to declare afresh that Indian freedom must be based on democracy and unity and the full recognition and protection of the rights of all minorities to which the Congress has always pledged itself.¹

The Committee approves of the formation by the Working Committee of the War Emergency Sub-Committee and authorizes the Working Committee to take such steps as may be necessary to give effect to this resolution and to their statement on the war crisis.²

Gandhi regarded this resolution as 'moderate and wise', and hoped that the government 'will appreciate the friendly spirit in which the Congress is approaching the situation'. He urged Congressmen 'to desist from any action that would savour of indiscipline and defiance'. *Haryana*, 21 October 1939, *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, vol. 70, p. 249.

¹ For Jawaharlal Nehru's speech on the CWC resolution at the AICC meeting on 10 October, see *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, vol. 10, pp. 178-81.

87. Nehru on the War Crisis

Speech on the Working Committee resolution at AICC, Wardha, 10 October 1939. *SWJN*, Vol. 10, pp. 178-81

10 October 1939

The passing of the resolution will have a deep effect on the country. For five years now, resolutions relating to war are being passed by the Congress. When the present war broke out, I was in China, and therefore could consider the question dispassionately. The Working Committee has taken an important step and it is now left to the AICC to make up their minds on the question. It is desirable that the AICC should meet from time to time to take decisions on all-important matters, but distances in India are so great that this is often difficult. I suggest, therefore, that the AICC should take its decisions on the Working Committee's resolution at this session itself.

It is the first time that the Congress leaders have met the Viceroy in this manner. I think that invitation extended to us by the Viceroy after the issue of the Working Committee's statement has significance. The issues before us are of a momentous nature. We are faced with a situation which might hold many surprises in the future and it is essential, therefore, that we should not take a false step. The international situation is by no means clear. Do not listen to the rumours regarding designs of this or that country, but be prepared for everything.

We have been taking interest in international matters, and this has added to our prestige and strength in the world. The Congress is known all over the country as a body trying to secure Indian independence. In placing the resolution before the House, our aim is to fight imperialism

and the question before us is how to do it. In principle, the resolution before us seeks that India should stand for an extension of democracy and freedom to all peoples. You may move amendments if you like, but I am sure you will all accept the principle of the resolution without hesitation.

The new plane in which India desires to play its due part might be unfamiliar, but nonetheless I have no hesitation in placing the resolution before you, because it is right and embodies the right policy. It is possible that we may make mistakes, but on this ground we should not avoid taking the course. During the last few years, a number of resolutions have been passed on war, and I have had quite a good share in shaping them. All these resolutions have only one meaning, that of opposing all war, and the policy now suggested is not different from that which has guided the past resolutions, and does not impinge on us in any degree. It is possible that it may lead to certain incidental difficulties. It is for us to consider whether it will be worth while taking the risk for such advantages as there may be, or avoid it for fear of the difficulties.

Functioning on a merely agitational plane may be brave, but we should also bear in mind the legitimate part we can play in the international plane. I would suggest that you should understand the difficulties and be ready to face and overcome them, especially when we may be dealing with unknown factors and possible difficulties in every direction. The Working Committee has taken note of every aspect of the matter, and the step it has taken is wise and far seeing and does not, in the slightest degree give in to imperialism. It is not at all cooperation or bargaining. The attitude taken is quite in consonance with India's legitimate share in world affairs.

News is controlled everywhere nowadays. Be cautious and do not be taken in by false fears and bogies. Otherwise totally wrong reactions may be produced. Without claiming to be a prophet I can say that there is no basis for being apprehensive of a Russian invasion of India.

S. Satyamurti: Why not?

Jawaharlal Nehru: My study of the world situation tells me that:

SS: Any other reasons?

JN: I would like to give them, but I might then drift away from the present subject. I am very much interested in the matter, and I would like to explain matters to Mr Satyamurti. The public mind is being diverted by such fears, and Mr Satyamurti is perhaps one of such victims. India will certainly resist any imperialist invasion by Russia.

SS: It will be a Bolshevik and not imperialist invasion.

JN: India should not allow bogies to interfere with her pursuit of her legitimate ambitions in the national and international planes, and if she forgets what is due to her in these matters, she will be false to her past and to the resolutions the Congress has passed.

If this resolution is passed, it will mean one thing, administration that is that it will shake to the foundations all imperialisms. I want India to play her part in this.

I am glad to find vigorous expression of views on the vital principles before us but I am convinced that the line we are now taking is that correct one. The other suggestions made will, by creating differences, only weaken us. While I appreciate the honest expression of views by the members, I feel that they have overlooked many points. The step we take should be effective, and these will fail if we created a wrong atmosphere of suspicion and doubt. Most of the amendments are weaker than the original resolutions and I feel that they will only make us incapable of any action.

The present war will create a new order in the world, and if India plays her part in the right direction, she can influence this change for the better. I warn you against creating confusion and divisions, as it will be dangerous for the country if we start moving in different directions. On the other hand, we should all pull together, conserving our strength and the power we have achieved so far.

Mr Majumdar's speech¹ did make an impression on me but it is the kind of speech suitable for calling strikes and is not suited to the atmosphere of the AICC. As for Mr Majumdar's suggestion for a national militia, while I may be sympathetic towards this proposal as such, I want to make it clear that there are only two courses open to us. One is that pointed out by the Working Committee and the other of opposing war preparations. There can be no other *via media*.

We should make sure of our foundations before launching on action. Some of the amendments are childish. Only four out of the twenty-three amendments were opposed to the approach suggested by the Working Committee. Sixteen amendments suggested verbal changes, some of them making the resolution uneven.

All of us agree with Mr Aney's amendment.² Who is opposed to the ideal of democracy? But there is no need for laying special emphasis on that aspect in the manner suggested by Mr Aney as the whole resolution supports the spirit of democracy and freedom. The addition of the word 'just' to legitimate minority rights will only create an atmosphere of suspicion.

The demand of the release of political prisoners does not arise in this context.

We have supported the principle of collective security. When a weaker nation is oppressed the other should go to its rescue, and so it would not be a question of strengthening British Imperialism if we decided to support the war. The present resolution will uproot British imperialism, and certainly not help it.

Mahatma Gandhi is firmly convinced that the principle of nonviolence should be applied in the present case also, but I do not see how we can ward off an armed attack by nonviolence.

Our path is slippery and we may commit mistakes. But it is necessary to maintain complete unity.

There is a demand for more information on the Viceregal talks. Nothing more than what I have already reported has happened. I expect that we will be able to know the result one way or the other in a fortnight's time. I agree that delay will be injurious, but we should not be in a hurry.

There are really no differences on principle among the members, but there is suspicion and mistrust. How can we solve this except by an appeal to you not to entertain mutual suspicion?

Dutt Majumdar had claimed that the country was fully prepared and if the Congress leaders missed the present opportunity the country would move forward without them. He also wanted a national militia to be created.

M S Aney had said that while it was necessary to protect minority interests, it should not lead them to entertain proposals which went against the principles of democracy and freedom.

88. On Congress-British Negotiations

The Negotiations, *Independent India*, Vol. III, No. 40, 10 October 1939

10 October 1939

Negotiations between the Congress leaders on the one hand and the Viceroy, as the representative of British imperialism on the other, are progressing. Early this week Gandhi had an interview with the Viceroy 'which it is reported lasted over three hours. No information is available regarding what transpired at the interview. But all the news agencies have unanimously declared it to be very satisfactory. One news agency has gone to the extent of saying that Gandhiji carries back with him at least the outline of an official proposal to place before the Congress Working Committee'. The news may or may not be correct. But the invitations subsequently issued by the Viceroy to Pandit Nehru and Rajendra Prasad lend support to the inference that a general agreement having been arrived at the Viceroy is now inviting the other two leaders to discuss with them the details of the pronouncement and the scheme which will satisfy the Congress.

Some Congress leaders notably Pandit Nehru have talked contemptuously about bargaining. Panditji was repeated *ad mausum* the phrase that it is beneath India's dignity to bargain. But in plain truth it is a bargain which is today in progress between the Viceroy and the Congress leaders. We are not opposed to bargaining as such. We have sympathy for the superior contempt affected by some of our last week that the Working Committee resolution itself was couched in a bargaining spirit. Our complaint was and is that our Congress leaders are resorting to bargaining and that too for trifles when they are in a position to dictate. Our leaders are under-estimating the Strength of the Congress. Owing to our own fault we may not be in a position today to effectively resist the war. But with eight provincial administration in our hands and with an overwhelming majority of the people at our back we are in a position to dictate terms to imperialism and make it concede some at least of our basic political demands. Our leaders chose to ignore this great strength of the Congress and consequently instead of dictating terms to imperialism they are today in the position of suitors at the door of imperialism.

The Working Committee left the initiative regarding the formulation of terms to the Government. And the Government is today formulating terms of its choice and will be asking the Congress leaders to take or leave them. According to reports appearing in the Anglo-Indian papers it seems very likely that some sort of an association with the Central Government either by the enlargement of the present Executive Council or by the creation of some ad-hoc Defence Council will be offered. This may be accompanied by a solemn statement declaring the war-aims and announcing the eventual evolution of India to the status of an equal partner in the British Commonwealth to be the goal of British Policy in India. It is on these terms that the cooperation of the Congress leaders will be sought and demanded by the British Government.

One cannot be dogmatic about the reactions of the Congress leaders to such a proposal as this. But there are enough straws in the wind to enable us to forecast the most likely course that they will take. We shall refer only to an editorial in the *National Herald* which is known to draw its inspiration from Pandit Nehru. While pleading for a simple declaration by Britain which is in accordance with its professions and which involves no drastic changes in the present constitutional machinery it wrote: instead of asking for independence which is the Congress objective, the Working Committee merely asked for the application to India of the principles of democracy and freedom to the largest extent possible in the existing conditions...

The course of action that our leaders will take is moreover predetermined by their policies and actions during the last two years. These have left them no other choice but to cooperate with imperialism on its own terms. The terms that they will be getting viz., association with the Central Government and a pious declaration about the eventual status of India will not contribute anything to the political progress of our country. Association of a few Congress leaders with the Central Government at Delhi will not change its irresponsible character nor will it free it from the leading string of the Whitehall. A pious declaration about status is meaningless and redundant and may prove positively harmful if its practical result is to be as suggested by the *National Herald* the treatment of India as a full equal in the matter of the vigorous prosecution of the war. These terms are not such as would secure for us enough political power to enable us to conquer freedom and establish democracy nor do they place us in such strategic positions as would guarantee our ultimate victory. It was this latter type of conditions that we had pleaded for last week as a condition precedent for any cooperation in an anti-fascist war. Our leaders could have secured them if they had the consciousness of the strength that they command and the revolutionary determination to wield it for the political progress of our country.

Fortunately all is not yet lost. There is still a chance of drawing our leaders away from that ignoble bargain. The bargain is not yet struck. The AICC is yet to meet and express its opinion on

these developments. If in these few days that are available to us we raise all over the country a hue and cry against this type of bargain there is still a chance of making our leaders adopt a more dignified and irreconcilable attitude. This cannot be done only by a clear formulation of our basic political demands and by a dogged insistence on their realisation as a precondition to any support in the anti-Fascist war. We have placed before the country our formulation of those demands. We would welcome a better or an alternative formulation. But it is only such a formulation that will give form and life to the vague sentiments expressed to do that, those sentiments, however noble, will only be a shield to hide the opportunist politics of our compromising leaders. That India what is happening today and we feel it our duty to warn the rank and file of the Congress against it.

89. Congress War Resolution

Editorial, *Tribune*, 11 October 1939

11 October 1939

The war crisis resolution placed by the Working Committee before the AICC is for the most part identical with the statement recently issued by the Working Committee from Wardha¹. The points of differences between the two are neither many nor vital. One of these is that while the statement wanted the British Government to elucidate their war aims and to make a declaration of their present and future intentions with regard to India and in particular to state whether it was their intention to treat India as a free nation, the resolution demands that India must be declared an independent nation and that present application must given to this status to the largest possible extent. But everyone who has statutory to any purpose knows that the distinctions between the two demands is a distinction without any substantial difference. The words complete independence have sometimes been interpreted to mean the severance of the British connection, but the severance of the British connection itself has likewise been interpreted to mean not the actual severance of the connection, but only the right to sever it, which is implicit in the very idea of freedom and is an essential ingredient in the conception of Domination status, as defined in the Statute of Westminster, which the British Government themselves have declared to be their objective in India. There is thus no difference between the previous demands that India should be declared an independent nation. It is interesting to observe in this connection that in both cases what the committee wants by way of the implementing of the declaration is not the framing of a full-fledged free and democratic constitution, but the application of the principles of freedom and democracy *to the largest possible extent*.

Another point of difference between the two pronouncements is that while the first demanded in a general way the creation of a new order and a new equilibrium by the ending of the domination and exploitation of one country by another and a representative-organisation of economic relations on a jester basis for the common good of all, the second says that 'freedom and peace can only be established and preserved by an extension of democracy to all colonial countries and by the application of the principle of self-determination to them so as to eliminate imperialist control.' This boot is really on the other leg. If the Congress is a great and 'powerful' organisation of the people of India, nothing can be more ignorant or more impertinent than the description of a demand on its part for the extension for democracy to the colonies as ignorant or impertinent. If it is right for the British Government to appeal to the people of India to cooperation wholeheartedly is, surely it is equally right for India herself to try to make sure that not only India but those other parts of the Present British Empire which are not yet self-governing should have the principles of democracy and freedom applied to them. All over the world people are being encouraged and even exhorted to replace a purely national and isolationist outlook and point of

view by a broad, international and human outlook. Is India the only country where such an outlook is to be regarded as a crime? Here, against, the only difference between the statement and the solutions that the demand which is implicit in the former is made explicit in the latter.

A third point of difference is that while the statement confined itself mostly to setting forth the facts of the case, the resolution specifically complains that 'in spite of the repeated declarations of the Congress in regard to war the British Government have declared India a belligerent country without the consent of the Indian people and various far-reaching measures have been hurried through the Legislature, vitally affecting them and circumscribing and limiting the powers of the provincial Governments'. While the justice of this complaining has been recognised by the more fair-minded British and Anglo-Indian newspapers, it has been challenged by one Anglo-Indian journal, which says that the Working Committee has overlooked the fact that 'no declaration was necessary and that India was by international law at war the moment Britain entered on hostilities'. The journal strangely forgets that the fact to which it refers is the very fact of which the Working Committee complains, namely, that Britain has only to embark on a war for India to be dragged willy-nilly into it. There could be more conclusive proof either of India's subjection of Britain or of the fundamental difference between her status and position and that of the Dominions, not one of which is 'by international law at war the moment Britain enters on hostilities'. This does not mean that India, if left free, would not participate in the war. The Working Committee has made it abundantly clear that she would not only participate in the war, but throw all her resources, material and human, into it provided of course, she was convinced, as she could easily be in this case, that the war was for the preservation of democracy and freedom. What is meant is that freedom is the first essential condition of India's active participation in the war.

The last point of difference is the only one that is substantial. While the statement demands in a general way the application of the principles of democracy and freedom to India, the resolution 'declared afresh that Indian freedom must be based on democracy and unity and the full recognition and protection of the rights of all minorities, to which the Congress has always pledged itself'. This part of the resolution is obviously the outcome of the hue and cry raised by the Muslim League and other sectional organisations, and probably, also of the talk that Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru had with Mr Jinnah². But we are constrained to say that while it will do little good, it may not improbably do much harm. The stress laid on democracy and unity will be overlooked or minimized, and political capital will be sought to be made out of the suggestion that the rights of all minorities should be fully recognised and protected. If the rights in this case meant only religious or cultural rights, nobody would object to the fullest possible recognition and protection being accorded to the rights of the minorities. But it has been persistently proclaimed from the house-tops that the rights in question not only include but are above everything, else political rights. Now, the position of the Congress has always been that no religious community as such has any political rights distinguishing it from any other religious community, that, in fact, politically there are no Hindus, Muslims, or Christians in India but only Indians, just as politically there are no Protestants and Catholics in England and France but only Englishmen and Frenchmen. We put it to the Working Committee that in laying down the otherwise unexceptional proposition it has enunciated, it ought to have made it perfectly clear that the only rights it had in view were the religious and cultural rights of the communities, and not their so-called political rights. The danger inherent in this part of the resolution was fully realised by Mr M.S. Aney who moved an amendment to it suggesting the insertion of the following words at the end of it.

'Without prejudice to the fundamental principles of nationalism and democracy as well as to the integrity of the Indian nation as one indivisible State.' The authors and supporters of the original resolution may contend that this is exactly what they mean by the words 'Indian freedom

must be based on democracy and unity'. But only a moment's reflection will show that Mr Aney's words are incomparably clearer and better suited for the common purpose than the words in the resolution. The best thing would, in fact, be to omit these words in the resolution. The best thing would, in fact, be to omit these words at the end. That is the only way in which the Congress, while pledging itself to protect the minority rights, can make sure that they shall not be protected and safeguarded at the expense of the higher interests of democracy, freedom and nationality.

¹ For the text of the Working Committee's Manifesto, see, the *CWMG*, vol. 70, Appendix x, pp. 409-13.

² Jawaharlal Nehru has a meeting with Jinnah on 3 October.

90. Anti-War Speeches by Socialists

Erskine to Linlithgow [Tel.], 11 October 1939, Linlithgow Papers, Acc. No. 2203, NAI

I am disturbed about the increasing number of anti-war and subversive speeches that are being made by Congress Socialists mainly in Malabar¹ and the Telugu districts.

2. Again though premier had agreed to prosecute an individual for making a further anti-war speech after being warned by police that if he continued to make such speeches he would be dealt with under Ordinance, the premier has now telegraphed from Wardha that this prosecution is to be held up.

3. Immunity from prosecution is undoubtedly encouraging these agitators.

4. For how long do you wish me to hold my hand before I insist on certain prosecutions? I realise that by insisting I might produce a break with Ministers but I feel that we cannot allow the present position to exist for very much longer.

¹ In Malabar, a volunteer rally of two thousand people was organised by the Congress Socialists. The District Magistrate prohibited the rally, but the leaders disregarded his orders. In Telugu districts secret newspapers were published to disseminate socialist ideas and to carry on the struggle for independence.

91. Secret Diplomacy

Editorial, *Independent India*, 15 October 1939

15 October 1939

Our leaders have repeatedly disowned any spirit of bargaining in stating the Congress attitude regarding India's cooperation in the War. We have criticised the pseudo-ethical approach to a question which will necessarily be settled through negotiation. Publicly, the Congress leaders refused to put forth any concrete demand. The statement of the Working Committee and subsequent pronouncements made in that connection only desired a clear regarding the peace and war aims of Britain. All sensible persons did not take those declarations on their face value. The Viceroy certainly did not invite the Congress leaders to talk about the weather. Nor did these latter keep mum when they saw the Viceroy expecting them to make the desired declaration. In conversations, there must have been some conversation that could proceed only on the basis of some proposal or demand made by the Congress leaders. Yet, publicly, our leaders persisted in the dignified but vague attitude. All but the blind hero-worshippers were puzzled by this stunt. But now the explanation is available. The Special Correspondent of the *Hindustan Times*, who can be expected to have free access into the Birla House, makes an interesting revelation. According to him, 'the demand of the Congress Working Committee has been so carefully and moderately put that the

talks last week must have undoubtedly revealed to the Viceroy general agreement on certain board issues'. So, that is the game. The Congress leaders are bargaining, but they have put forth only moderate demands. Presumably, the demands are so moderate that the leaders were afraid that they might not be approved by Congressmen in general. It will be a different matter when the agreement is reached on the basis of the moderate demands; in that case, the AICC or a Special Session of the Congress will be confronted with an accomplished fact. The action of the leaders must be endorsed, any other verdict will amount of the vote of no confidence in the leaders. That is not at all very likely to happen. From the same informed and inspired source, yet another recreation has been made. It is that the Congress leaders, while publicly deprecating bargaining spirit, are actually carrying on secret diplomacy. We read the following in the report:

Formerly, the Congress used to work in open, discuss and decide its plan in open, and carry on its fight in open. Now, however, conditions have so vastly changed that the Congress High Command has to guard its confidential discussions with as much vigilance as the Government would its Cabinet Secrets. When delicate negotiations are going on, it would be obviously unwise to allow premature publicity.

So, negotiations are going on. They must have some basis. Britain has not yet responded to the Congress desire for a clear declaration of her war and peace aims. The basis for the negotiations must have been provided from the other side. This is all very natural. Since an agreement is admittedly desired, there must be bargaining about its terms. Why then all this secret diplomacy? The exclusion of democracy is not the proper method of fighting for freedom and democracy.

92. In the Blind Alley

Editorial, *Independent India*, 15 October 1939

15 October 1939

It may sound harsh but truth compels us to say that the leadership of our national movement has led it into a blind alley where defeat and disruption stare it in the face. A dispassionate consideration of the events of the last month and a half leaves us no alternative but to pass this judgment on the actions of our leaders. Those who are in the habit of being carried away by words have to probe a little below the surface. Words are deceptive and they have been never so deceptive as in the recent pronouncements of the Working Committee,¹ the AICC and our national leaders.

The Working Committee pronouncement of September 14 was endorsed by the AICC. Its resolution reiterates the arguments of the Working Committee manifesto and holds out a fresh invitation to the British Government to declare their war and peace aims. Here again no period is specified within which the declaration should be made, an amendment to that effect having been navigated by an overwhelming majority. The British Government need not, therefore, be in a particular hurry to make the declaration as the AICC resolution as the Working Committee manifesto is an invitation to the British Government to declare its war and peace aims, to declare India an independent nation and to give present application of this status to the largest possible extent.

On this analysis we had and have no hesitation in characterizing those pronouncements as bargaining offers. Our leader's vague talks about a free India alone deciding her attitude towards the war are just so many meaningless phrases. They cut no ice with the party to which they are addressed viz., Britain imperialism. If those words had any meaning that was no scope for talks with the Viceroy. India can be free not as a result of a Viceregal declaration but on the strength of her own power and organisation. If our leaders had presented the demand for national freedom

the talks would have ended the moment they began. The talks continued only because our leaders were realistic enough to know that they could discuss with the Viceroy only 'the present application of this status to the largest possible extent'. The real meaning and content of the phrase 'the largest possible extent' could alone have been the subject of negotiations between the Viceroy and the Congress leaders.

The readiness of our leaders to cooperate with imperialism on certain terms for the prosecution of the war is no longer open to doubt. Inspired by that desire they entered into negotiations with the representative of imperialism and sought to extract those terms from him. While these negotiations are going on, a smoke screen of beautiful phrases and noble sentiments is raised to hide the real character of those negotiations from their millions of trusting followers. It was expected that the negotiations would end early and a bargain easily struck. That was the perspective in early September.

But in the meanwhile the situation has undergone a material change. The accommodating imperialism is hardening into an adamant one. The enthusiastic and full-throated support that it is getting from non-Congress quarters and the care and smoothness with which its war machine is moving renders imperialism less eager to have an understating with the Congress. The worldly lack of strength and the pitiable indecisiveness betrayed by the Congress leadership during the last month and a half have encouraged imperialist statesmen to hope that they can have Congress cooperation on their own terms. Some of them have gone to the extent of believing that it can be dictated.

The first indication of a change in the attitude of imperialism was provided by the outspoken speech of Lord Zetland.² The vigorous retort that it received from Gandhi³ and Jawaharlal⁴ compelled imperialism to go slow in that direction. Efforts were made to explain it away. But since then situation has changed materially in its favour. The verbal retorts were not followed by positive actions. There was on the other hand redouble anxiety to arrive at an understanding. Over and above this was the decisive fact that imperialism had the situation well in hand and its war operations could go on without the support and cooperation of the Congress. This had encouraged imperialism to affect a definite shift in its position.

This is evidence by the leading article in the *London Times*. This most authoritative organ of British imperialism declared in its editorial: 'The problem will not be solved by compliance with the wishes of the Working Committee. The British Government cannot bind themselves to concede to the Indian Congress party that would amount to a monopoly of representation of Indian political opinion.' In answer to the Congress demand for clarification of war aims and their present applications to India to the largest extent possible, it says:

'It is hard to see how the Imperial Government can do more to meet the Congress demands than to emphasise determination to continue the Progressive policy they have followed consistently for over twenty years.'

The *Times* castigates the Congress leaders for hoping 'to extract political profit from the situation by inducing the British Government to make further constitutional concessions' and contrasts this ungenerous attitude of the Congress leaders with the 'generous offers of aid and cooperation which the government of India have received from the Princes and with the spirited attitude of the Premiers of the Muslim Provinces of Punjab, Bengal and Sind.' An echo of this changed attitude of imperialism was seen in an inspired message from Simla saying that the Viceroy was not agreeable to making any changes in the Central Government or even to the formation of temporary Defence Council. The interminable interviews that the Viceroy is granting to all and Sunday is a further proof of the stiffening attitude of the British Government.

That being the present attitude of imperialism a most disagreeable and disconcerting situation faces the Congress leadership. Its offer of cooperation may find no response from imperialist quarters. Instead of a honourable compromise it may be compelled to sign a deed of capitulation. It has to thank itself for this grave deterioration of the situation. Its weakness and indecisiveness turned the tables and gave the upper hand to imperialism. Having lost the opportunity to dictate terms to imperialism it has now placed the national movement in a position where imperialism can dictate terms to it.

Given the decisive opinion of Gandhi that the country is not prepared for the struggle, we are not sure that even in this situation our leaders will lead us in a struggle against imperialism. But the hopelessness of the situation is being progressively realised by them. In a speech delivered at a flag hoisting ceremony at Wardha immediately after the AICC meeting Rajendrababu, the Congress president declared: 'We have to be prepared for a grim fight which may overtake us. We hope for the best but we must prepare ourselves for the worst'. There is a ring of despair in these words. It is now that they are thinking of a fight and of a fight not chosen by us but of one which 'may overtake us'. The result of a fight depends to a very large extent on the methods, the ground and the time selected for the fight. Instead of choosing them ourselves our leaders have left the choice to the other party. They let slip the opportunity when they could have dictated terms to imperialism. They deliberately neglected the task of preparing the country for a struggle relying on 'fruitful cooperation with imperialism' to solve the problems before the country. Now when imperialism refused to have that cooperation except on its own terms they are faced with the alternative of either meekly accepting those terms or being forced into an unequal struggle on a ground and at a time chosen by imperialism. Verily have they led the country and the national movement into a blind alley.

¹ At Wardha on 10 October.

² Speech by Zetland in House of Lords on 26 September.

³ In a statement to the Press on 28 September 1939, Gandhi appealed to Lord Zetland to 'forget the old language of imperialists and open a new chapter for all those who have been under imperial bondage.'

⁴ In a speech at Allahabad on 29 September 1939, Jawaharlal Nehru said: 'If Lord Zetland's speech represents the mind of the English people or government, I have no hesitation in saying that there can be no compromise between the Congress and the British Government now or a thousand years hence.'

93. Hindu Mahasabha and War

Statement issued on 15 October 1939 by V.D. Savarkar, President of the Hindu Mahasabha, in connection with his interview with the Viceroy on 9 October 1939 at Bombay, M.S. Aney Papers, F. No. 7 of the Subject files, NMML

[Extract]

15 October 1939

V.D. Savarkar, President of the Hindu Mahasabha, issued the following statement in connection with his interview with the Viceroy on 9 October 1939:

'In order to meet the natural demand by the Hindu Sangathanists all over India to know precisely what attitude I took at the interview I had with the Viceroy in representing the Hindu Mahasabha's view in connection with the Indian political situation created by the European War and also to refute misrepresentation by the anti-Hindu Sabha press, I think it is advisable to issue this statement touching the salient points I emphasized during the course of my conversation at

the interview and which I am free to publish without transgressing the general convention to be observed in reporting confidential consultations:

- (1) The Hindu Mahasabha feels that none of the belligerent powers in Europe, including Poland and above all Russia, was or is actuated by any moral human principles as "Democracy" or "the Liberties of the down-trodden" or "Political Justice and Equity" beyond what suited the self-interest of the respective nations and states. The British claim in particular that they were out to render democracy safe in the world cannot be taken seriously in any other light but as a political stunt so long as they continue to hold India in political subjugation.
- (2) Consequently, the Hindu Mahasabha also feels itself concerned about the issues at stake in the War in so far only as they are likely to effect the safety and interest of the Hindu Nation.
- (3) That is why it is absolutely necessary that the British Government could make an unambiguous declaration of granting Hindustan the status of a self-governing Dominion as an immediate step leading towards the final goal and to introduce responsible and popular Government at the Centre so that the Hindus may be assured that in fighting this war they are serving the cause of their national freedom as well.
- (4) Any such constitution to be immediately introduced, ought to be based on no other principle of electoral representation but the democratic one of "one man of vote" irrespective of race of religion, class or creed. But if that is found unfeasible then the second best solution should be separate electorates for Hindus and Muslims, representation being based on the proportion to population. The Hindu Mahasabha will oppose any humiliating justice done to the Hindus by levying a kind of electoral "jizya" as the nefarious Communal Award does at present. The Hindus must have full representation in proportion to their population; they will tolerate nothing less, they demand nothing more. The depressed classes alone may be given a weightage or some such special protection for a definite period of time.
- (5) All citizens whether they belong to minorities or majorities will be guaranteed full freedom to follow their faith, culture and language so far as it does not infringe on the equal rights of others and is consistent with public moral and peace.
- (6) The grant of such a constitution forthwith will persuade the Hindus in their own interest to extend responsive co-operation to the British Government in so far as the defence of India during this European War is concerned.
- (7) As a task of defending India from any military attack is of common concern to the British Government as well as ourselves and as we are unfortunately not in a position today to carry out that responsibility unaided, there is ample room for responsive co-operation between India and England in that respect. Secondly, the probable entry of Russia in the War against England may threaten India with a far more serious danger of an invasion through Afghanistan. The treacherous conduct of a very large section of the Muslims in India in the Khilafat agitation during the last Great War in 1914 has taught us a lesson ever to be forgotten as it is almost sure to be repeated in any future attack on India on the North-Western Frontier by any alien power. The tribesmen and the Muslim forces throughout Punjab, Sindh, etc., are very likely to betray the Hindus and rise *en masse* in pursuance of the pan-Islamic designs to carve out an independent Muslim State or Federation stretching out from Baluchistan to Kashmir to Delhi. In view of the attitude of many a responsible Muslim organisation in India, as revealed by their resolutions

passed in their open sessions betraying their extra-territorial sympathies, it would be nothing short of a suicidal and blind step on the part of the Hindus to make light of this serious danger threatening them. Under such an emergency they will have to ally themselves with the British forces in the common objectives to avert the national Calamity. In order to make cooperation on the part of the Hindus in these cases effective, the British Government should forthwith take the following steps:

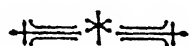
- (a) To guard the North-Western Frontier by overwhelming Hindu military forces instead of Muslim ones;
 - (b) To chastise the tribes with a strong hand and to tame them into such a submission as to render them incapable to dare again to rise or revolt or raid with a view to harass the Hindu population or threaten the integrity of the Indian nation;
 - (c) To encourage and help with arms, ammunition and experts the efforts to raise a force of Hindu national militia meant to shoulder the responsibility of India defence;
 - (d) To introduce compulsory military training in high schools and colleges throughout India, as in England or Germany with an up-to-date military efficiency;
 - (e) To encourage and spread the movement for starting rifle clubs all over India which has already been set on foot in Maharashtra and Berar;
 - (f) To modify the Arms Act to bring it on par with what prevails in England;
 - (g) To expand on an extensive scale India territorial force and the UTC;
 - (h) To throw recruiting open to all classes doing away with the unjust, unreal and humiliating distinction of the enlisted and classes and
 - (i) To take in general every step to bring the Indian Army, Navy and aerial forces to an up-to-date efficiency, to inspire the people of India to feel instinctively that the Indian Army will be the army of the people of India and not of their British overlords and undertake not to use these Indian forces in any other theatre of war outside India which has no direct connection with the defence of India proper.
8. The Hindu Mahasabha emphatically asserts that as the Congress does not and cannot represent the Hindus no constitutional or administrative settlement arrived at behind the back of the Hindu Mahasabha between the Government on the one hand and the Congress or the League on the other, will be binding on the Hindus unless and until it is sanctioned by the Mahasabha.

94. Anti-War Agitation by the Ahrars

Leader, 17 October 1939

17 October 1939

The Frontier Majlis-i-Ahrar has formed a 'war council' with Maulana Abdul Qaiyum Papalzai, President of the Peshawar Majlis-i-Ahrar as the first dictator to launch an anti-war propaganda in the Frontier and the Punjab. The war council has decided to send *jathas* of Ahrar volunteers to the Punjab to defy the provisions of the Defence of India Ordinance and to court arrest. The first jatha of five Ahrar volunteers left yesterday. It was taken out in a procession which passed through the main streets of Peshawar shouting anti-war slogans.



95. Nehru and Azad on the Viceroy's Statement

Joint statement issued by Maulana Azad and Jawaharlal, Lucknow, 17 October 1939. *Hindu*, 18 October 1939, *SWJN*, Vol.10, pp. 193-94

17 October 1939

We have read the Viceroy's statement with deep regret. If this is the final answer of the British Government to the people of India, then there is no common ground between the two, and our paths diverge completely.

The whole statement is a complete repudiation of all that India stands for nationally and internationally. It is a statement which would have been out of date twenty years ago; today it has absolutely no relation to reality. There is no mention in it of independence, freedom, democracy or self-determination; no attempt even to justify the dragooning of India and her being forced to join an adventure for objectives which are not hers. These objectives appear clearly from the Viceroy's statement to be preservation and maintenance of the British imperial and financial structure, in India and abroad. The 'better international system' to which the British Premier has referred is evidently meant to preserve and strengthen this structure. Apart from this, it relates, according to him, to peoples of Europe and not to Asia or Africa. India continues where she is; the colonies remain where they are; imperialism is still meant to flourish.

All this seems to follow from the Viceroy's statement, and if this is the aim of the war, it is difficult to imagine that even the British Government, living as it does in an age that is past and done with, can expect any self-respecting Indian to cooperate with it. The hand of friendship that the Congress has extended has been spurned by their Government how far that Government represents them it is for the British to say, but we have to consider the Viceroy's statement as England's reply to India.

What our next step should be, it would be premature and improper for us to say at this stage. That is for the Working Committee to decide and the Committee is meeting for that purpose soon. The hour is a grave one and required all our united wisdom and courage and discipline and mutual forbearance. Let us bear ourselves with dignity and restraint and hold together in the cause of India's freedom.

1. See Enclosure: 1

2. Addressing the Parliament on 12 October 1939, the Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain declared that Britain sought no national advantage for herself, but desired the establishment of a better international system and a real and lasting peace.

3. The Working Committee declared the Viceregal statement as 'wholly unsatisfactory' and calculated to rouse resentment among all those who are anxious to gain, and are intent upon gaining India's independence.

Enclosure: 1

Viceroy's Declaration

17 October 1939

Since the outbreak of war, and more particularly during the last four weeks I have been in the closest touch with the leaders of political opinion in British India and with representatives of the Princely Order... I have had the advantage of a full and frank discussion with no fewer than 52 people—with Mr Gandhi, with the President and Members of the Congress Working Committee, with Mr Jinnah and with representative members of the Muslim League Organisation, with the

Chancellor of the Chamber of Princes, and with a great variety of persons prominent in the political life of British India.

As was only to be expected, conversations with representatives of so many different points of view revealed marked differences of outlook, markedly different demands, and markedly different solutions for the problems that lie before us...

The essential matters on which a clarification of the position is beyond any question desired are:

First, what are the objectives of His Majesty's Government in the war. To what extent are they of such a character that India with her long history and great traditions can, with a clear conscience, associate herself with them? Second, what is the future that is contemplated in the constitutional sphere for the Indian Continent? What are the intentions of His Majesty's Government? Is it possible to define those intentions more precisely and in such a manner as to leave the world in no doubt as to the ultimate status envisaged for India as far as the British Commonwealth is concerned?

Third, in what way can the desire of Indian Public opinion for a closer association, and an effective association, with the prosecution of the war best be satisfied? His Majesty's Government have not themselves yet defined with any ultimate precision their detailed objectives in the prosecution of the war. It is obvious that such a definition can come only at later stage in the campaign, and that when it does come, it cannot be a statement of the aims of any single ally. There may be many changes in the world position and in the situation that confronts us before the war comes to an end, and much must depend on the circumstances in which it does come to an end; and on the intervening course of the campaign...

We are fighting to resist aggression whether directed against ourselves or others. Our general aims have been stated by the Prime Minister within the last few days as follows:

We are seeking no material advantage for ourselves. We are not aiming only at Viceroy, but looking beyond it to laying a foundation of a better international system which will mean that war is not to be the inevitable lot of each succeeding generation. We, like all the peoples of Europe, long for peace; but it must be a real and settled peace, not an uneasy truce interrupted by constant alarms and threats.

This statement, I think, clearly establishes the nature of the cause for which we are fighting, and justifies, if justification is needed, the extension by India of her moral support and her goodwill to the prosecution of that cause.

Let me turn now to the second question which has been put to me—the question of India's future and of the lines of her constitutional development... today, the constitutional position of India and the policy of His Majesty's Government are governed by the provisions of the Government of India Act, 1935. Part III of that Act, which provides for the conferment of Provincial Autonomy on the Provinces of British India, has been implemented. For nearly 2 ½ years now the Provinces have been conducting their own affairs under the scheme of the Act. That they have done so, on the whole, with great success, even if now and then difficulties have arisen, no one can question. Whatever the political party in power in those Provinces, all can look with satisfaction on a distinguished record of public achievement during the last 2 ½ years. The experience that they have had, has shown beyond any question that, whatever minor problems, the application of the scheme of the Act may have parented, whatever difficulties may have confronted us in the operation of the Act from time to time in the provincial sphere, the scheme of the Act is essentially sound, and that it transfers great power and gives opportunities to popularly elected governments dependent on the support of a majority in their legislatures.

The second stage contemplated by the Act was the reconstitution of the Central Government on such a basis as to achieve the essential goal of Indian unity. The method contemplated for that

purpose was the achievement of a Federation of all India in which the representatives of all political parties in British India would, together with the Rulers of the Indian States, form a unified Government of India as a whole... I have throughout believed that the federal scheme in its operation would have turned out as satisfactorily as, broadly speaking, we can all of us regard the scheme of Provincial Autonomy as having turned out. I will not dilate on that subject today, for our work in connection with the federal scheme has been suspended. But in reaffirming as I do my belief in the essential soundness of the federal aspects of the Act of 1935, I do so with the greater emphasis because of the evidence which the federal provisions of the Act constitute, of the anxiety of His Majesty's Government to achieve, with the minimum of delay, and on the basis which appears to represent the greatest amount of agreement between the various parties and interests affected, the unity of India, and to advance beyond a further and a most important milestone on the road to India's goal.

Such being the background against which we are working, what are the intentions and aims of His Majesty's Government, and with their full authority, by the late Secretary of State of India in the House of Commons on the 6th February 1935. The statement makes the position clear beyond a shadow of doubt... I need not dilate on the words of that statement. They are clear and positive. They are enshrined in the parliamentary record. They stand as a definite and categorical exposition of the policy of His Majesty's Government today, and of their intentions today in this end, the future constitutional development and position of India. I would add only that the Instrument of Instructions issued to me, as Governor-General by His Majesty's the King-Emperor in May 1937, lays upon me as Governor-General a direction so to exercise the trust which His Majesty has reposed in me 'that the partnership between India and the United Kingdom within our Empire may be furthered to the end that India may attain its due place our Dominions.'

That is the policy and that is the position. Those are the intentions of His Majesty's Government. Let me go on to say another word about the Act of 1935. That Act was based on the greatest measure of common agreement which it was possible to obtain at the time when it was framed. It was based, as is well known to all of us, on the common labours of British and Indian statesmen, and of representatives of British India as well as of the Indian States over a long period of years. All parties were at one stage or other closely associated with those deliberations...

Be that as it may, His Majesty's Government recognise that when the time comes to resume consideration of the plan for the future Federal Government of India, and of the plan destined to give effect to the assurances given in Parliament by the late Secretary of State, to which I have just referred, it will be necessary to reconsider in the light of the then circumstances to what extent the details of the plan embodied in the Act of 1935 remain appropriate.

And I am authorized now by His Majesty's Government to say that at the end of the war they will be very willing to enter into consultation with representatives of several communities, parties and interests, in India, and with the Indian Princes, with a view to securing their aid and cooperation in the framing of such modification as many seem desirable. I have, I trust, in what I have just said, made clear that the intention and the anxiety of His Majesty's Government, as stated in the Instrument of Instructions to the Governor-General, to further the partnership between India and the United Kingdom within the Empire to the end that India may attain her due place among the great Dominions. The scheme of Government embodied in the Act of 1935 was designed as an essential stage in that process.

But I have made clear in what I have just said that His Majesty's Government will, at the end of the war, be prepared to regard the scheme of the Act as open to modification in the light of Indian views.

And I would make it clear, too, that it will be their object, as at all times in the past it has been, to spare no pains to further agreement by any means in their power in the hope of contributing to the ordered and harmonious progress of India towards her goal.

Let me in the connection add that in the conversations I have had, representatives of the minorities have urged most strongly on me that necessity of a clear assurance that full weight would be given to their views and to their interests in any modifications that may be contemplated. On that I need say no more than that over more than a decade, at the three Round Table Conferences, and at the Joint Select Committee, His Majesty's Government consulted with and had the assistances of the advice of representatives of all parties, and all interests in this country. It is unthinkable that we should now proceed to plan afresh, or to modify in any respect, any important part of India's future Constitution without again taking counsel with those who have in the recent past been so closely associated in a like task with His Majesty's Government and with parliament.

That some even more extensive scheme than I have mentioned, some even more widely phrased indication of the intentions of His Majesty's Government, is desired in certain quarters in this country, I am fully aware from the conversations I have had during these last few weeks.

This that is a desire held with sincerity, and that those who hold it are convinced that it is in the manner in question that the future progress and development of India and the expressed intentions of His Majesty's Government can best be fulfilled, I fully and readily accept. I would utter one word only of caution... it is essential in matters of this nature, affecting the future of tens of millions of people, affecting the relations of the great communities, affecting the Princes of India, affecting the immense commercial and industrial enterprises, whether Indian or European, in this country that the largest measure of agreement practicable should be achieved. With the best will in the world, progress must be conditioned by practical considerations....

I would ask that these words of caution be not taken as indicating any lack of sympathy on the part of His Majesty's Government for the aspirations of India, or any indifference to the pace of her advance; and I would repeat that His Majesty's Government are but concerned to use their best endeavours, now as in the past, to bring about that measure of agreement and understanding between all parties and all interests in this country which is so essential a condition of progress to India's goal.

I turn now to the arrangements to be made to secure the association of public opinion in India with the conduct of the war. India's contribution has already been great to a degree which has impressed the imagination of the world. At the head of the list I would put the contribution which India has made in spiritual, and not in material, terms--the support of her peoples for a cause which they can regard as a good and a righteous cause. In the material field equally her contribution is already most significant, and may be greater still. And in the circumstances the desire, the anxiety of public opinion in India to be associated with the conduct of the war is naturally one with which I personally have throughout felt the greatest sympathy. In the circumstances I have described, the desirability of steps to ensure that leaders of public opinion should be in the closest touch with developments is of the first importance.

I have discussed with the utmost frankness with the leaders of the various parties who have been good enough to come to see me in connection with constitutional position, by what machinery we could best give effect to this desire...

I will only say that in the light of my conversations and of the views (by no means always in accord) of representatives of the great parties and of the Princes, I am of opinion that the right solution would be the establishment of a consultative group, representative of all major political parties in British India and of the Indian Princes, over which the Governor-General would himself preside, which would be summoned at his invitation, and which would have as its object the

association of public opinion in India with the conduct of the war and with questions relating to war activities.

This group, for practical reasons, would inevitably be limited in size. But His majesty's Government contemplate that it should be fully representative, and in particular that its personnel should be drawn by the Governor-General from panels prepared by the various major political parties, from which a selection of individuals to attend meetings of the group would be made by the Governor-General.

I hope in the very near future to enter into consultation with political leaders and with the Princes on this question. I have no doubt whatever, that an arrangement of this nature will most materially contribute to association that Indian States and British India with the steps which are being taken for the prosecution of the war, and with the arrangements that are being made in that connection; and I am confident, too, that in an association of this nature of representatives of all parties and all interests, there lies the germ of that fuller and broader association of all points of view in this country which contains in it the seeds of such advantage for the future of India as a whole.

When I spoke to the Central Legislature a month ago, I made an appeal for unity. I would repeat that appeal today.... We live in difficult and anxious days. Those dangers are as real and as imminent in the case of India as of any other member of the British Commonwealth of Nations. Those ideals are as precious to India as to any country in the Empire or in the world. At this grave moment in the destinies of nations my prayer to all parties would be not to dissociate themselves from the common efforts, but to lend their cooperation and their assistance in the prosecution of the war. There could be no decisive proof of India's fidelity to her best traditions than the full use of the opportunities afforded to her by the war for concerted endeavour. The deals we have set before us, the objects to secure which we are engaged in the present struggle, are such as to command wide-spread sympathy and widespread traditions. It is my hope that in the grave juncture which we face, India will go forward as a united country in support of a common cause.

96. Sapru on Viceroy's Statement

T.B. Sapru to Kailas Narain Haksar, 17 October 1939, Sapru Papers, File No. 5-2, NMML

As regards the long interviews which have been taking place at Delhi my forecast is that there will be some kind of declaration. It will be nothing like what the Congress expects or would like to have. It is doubtful to my mind whether the Congress will then resign or will start civil disobedience....

This letter was dictated yesterday evening. This morning's papers contain the declaration of the Viceroy. I give below my first reactions:

1. It must cause great disappointment to the Congress in so far as:

- (a) it refuses to concede their demand about the Constituent Assembly, which has always seemed to me not only foolish but dangerous in the circumstances of India;
- (b) it reiterates the pledge about the dominion Status only forecasting that in the light of the experience gained during the war and also in the light of the experience gained in the provinces the process will be expedited;
- (c) it brings out into prominent relief the differences of opinion existing in India and while it does not say that the minorities will be allowed to effectively stop all progress it emphasizes the need for settlement of the minorities question;
- (d) it re-envisages the revival of Federation together with a settlement with the Indian States;

- (e) it recognizes the possibility of Congress Governments going out of office and makes an appeal to them not to do so; and
- (f) it once again disposes of the myth that labour and liberal politicians in England or newspapers like the *Manchester Guardian* or the *News Chronicle* or the *Daily Herald* are use foundations to build your hopes on.

2. What its reactions may be in Congress circles it is difficult for me to say with any degree of certainty. The rank and file want a strong step, that is say, resignations and the revival of civil disobedience. I do not, however, think that the Ministers want this or that the Mahatma wants it. Subhas Bose will once again drive his Congress colleagues to some other madness.

3. The internal position will not be eased by this declaration but no declaration can do so at this juncture. Even if a declaration of the type wanted by the Congress has been conceded that would have caused a flare up among the minorities, the Indian States and non-Congress circles.

97. The Political Situation in UP

Haig to Linlithgow, 18 October 1939, Haig Papers, Acc. No. 2068, NAI

My dear Lord Linlithgow,

I have been, as Your Excellency knows, in some anxiety regarding the rather dangerous conditions that are bound to prevail in the United Provinces during the long period of uncertainty as to whether Congress will or will not cooperate in the War. Soon after the outbreak of war the situation seemed to me to be deteriorating rapidly. I drew attention to this in para 4 of my telegram No. 265-G, date December 19, stressed the point that it was dangerous to let the movement gather strength unchecked, and emphasized and great desirability of the earliest possible decision as to the attitude of the Congress to the War. I re-emphasised these points in my telegram No. 265-G, dated September 28, that the situation had not further deteriorated, though a number of very undesirable speeches were being made. I think that probably represents the position today. Gandhi's influence and instructions issued by the provincial Congress committee have, I think, had a considerable effect in restraining the more orthodox Congressmen, and even the left wing extremist, so far as they are acting under the discipline of their own organisation, seems to me not to wish to press matters too far so long as there is a chance that they will be able to bring in the whole Congress organisation on their side against the war. Nevertheless, there still remains a considerable volume of anti-British and anti war speeches which must be doing harm. It is too early for me to write with confidence about the effect of the circular giving District magistrates free hand to proceed under Section 108, Criminal Procedure Code, against any speakers who are instigating violence, (A copy of this circular was enclosed in my letter No. UP-312, dated October 9, 1939). I think it is bound to have some appreciable effect in restraining the more dangerous speakers. I also directed the police some weeks ago to report, with a view to obtaining the sanction of Government for prosecution under section 124A or section 153A, Indian Penal Code, speeches made by the more dangerous revolutionaries. In accordance with these instructions an appreciable number of applications for sanction are now under the consideration of Government, and several of them have recently reached me through Katju. I find his attitude not very satisfactory. He is inclined to grasp at excuses for doing nothing and I have in several cases made it clear on the files that I am not disposed to agree with him and that in my opinion definite action is very necessary. I am intending to discuss these cases with him when I reach Lucknow. If I find his attitude from my point of view unreasonable, I shall take the matter up with Kidwai. My present intention is to press the Ministries pretty hard over this but I quite realise that if they are anticipating the probability

of their own resignation they may decline at this stage to incur the unpopularity of ordering prosecutions.

2. If I can get some of these prosecutions sanctioned and if District Magistrates make reasonable use of the powers that have been given to them by the circular I have mentioned earlier, I am hoping that this may serve to keep the present situation under control. It is not altogether easy to estimate how things really stand. The police continue to send in rather alarmist reports. In their last report, dated 12th October, it is said—‘The flood of invectives against the British continues and this week has seen a very large number of violent and objectionable speeches.’ They also report that ‘there is considerable evidence to show that preparations are being made for agitation over the war question in anticipation of a breakdown in the discussions between His Excellency the Viceroy and various leaders,’ and they say that there is beginning to be talk of no rent campaigns and civil disobedience. On the other hand the Commissioners’ fortnightly reports which have just reached me, while they record a number of objectionable speeches, convey the impression on the whole that there is a lull in open extremist agitation and that the left wing as well as the right are waiting for the outcome of the conversations. I think this is probably a fair estimate of conditions at the moment.

3. The information which Your Excellency has sent me recently suggests that even if the Congress are dissatisfied with the declaration that is to be made, it is likely that there will be no immediate break with the Congress. I have seen trying to picture how the situation is likely to develop in this province. In the first place, if the Congress, as suggested in para 4 of Your Excellency’s telegram No. 2284-S, dated October 15, while they consider the statement unsatisfactory, endeavour to secure some modifications, we should imagine still be in the existing position of continuance of negotiations, and conditions in the province might remain for a further period much as they are at present.

4. The Congress might, however, merely reject the statement made on behalf of His Majesty’s Government as inadequate and unsatisfactory and leave the resulting situation in the provinces to work itself out. In other words, they would let the Ministries carry on until the position becomes impossible. There has been talk from time to time to the effect that Congress Ministries would not resign, but would wait to be dismissed by the Governors. There would in my view be no question of dismissing my Ministers. If I come to the conclusion that it was impossible to retain them, there would I think be no difficulty in forcing their resignation by insisting under my special powers on certain action being taken in which they could not acquiesce.

5. If the situation is to develop on these lines, I think it might be advisable, looking merely at the conditions of this province, for me to take the initiative very quickly. The Ministers I think would be anxious to remain in office as long as possible partly with the idea that assent might be given to the Tenancy Bill, partly in order to complete other schemes. It would in any case take a considerable time to give assent to the Tenancy Bill, which I shall not do without a fairly full reference to Your Excellency; but I should certainly not propose to grant assent while the question of the Ministers remaining in office was still hanging in the balance. But while the Ministers may be anxious for various reasons to stay in office as long as possible, I am disposed to think it would be dangerous for me to allow such a situation to continue for long. If there is going to be trouble it is in my opinion necessary to take far more drastic action than the measures which, as I have explained above, are now being taken. The longer that action is postponed, the more difficult the eventual situation is likely to be. The left wing are undoubtedly working hard and making their preparations. A considerable volume of anti-British and anti-war speeches goes unchecked. The knowledge that Government are hesitating, and that the ample powers they possess under the Ordinance are not being used is unsettling. This state of uncertainty may well have an unsettling

effect on the Services, and it is discouraging to those who want to support us. All those factors will be greatly intensified when it appears that the Congress are not really prepared to cooperate in the war, and that therefore a break is inevitable. The present hesitation is widely recognised as being that of the Ministers. In the circumstances however which I am considering, the hesitation would clearly be that of the Governor, and this would produce a very damaging impression. I quite appreciate that it is necessary to subordinate provincial requirements to all-India policy; but if in fact it becomes clear that a break is inevitable, it looks as if I may have to ask Your Excellency's concurrence to my forcing a break pretty soon.

6. The third possibility is that the Congress would not only declare themselves dissatisfied with the declaration of His Majesty's Government, but would proceed to call out the provincial Ministries simultaneously.

This would be a straightforward situation. I understand, however, that you do not think it is a likely development.

Yours sincerely,
Sd. H.G. Haig

His Excellency
The Most Honourable
The Marquess of Linlithgow.

98. J.P. Srivastava to Sapru, 18 October 1939.

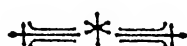
Sapru Papers, File No. 5-2, NMML

My dear Sir Tej Bahadur,

Thanks for your letter of the 14th October 1939. I am so sorry that it is not possible for you to be in Lucknow on the 8th November. I was rather counting on your giving me your powerful support on this occasion. I hope to come to Allahabad for a day on Sunday the 29th when I would naturally come and see you.

The Viceroy's statement has caused something of a furore in Lucknow, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, who both happen to be in Lucknow today, are reported to have been thunder-struck by the statement and have given expression to their great indignation at it. I do not know what is going to be their next move. You must have seen the war resolution which is being moved in the Legislative Assembly on the 26th. I shall be very grateful if in consultation with Chintamani you could favour me with some tips as to the line which I should follow in dealing with that resolution.

I see that the Viceroy has decided to set up War Advisory Council. I am sure you will be asked to serve on it and I do hope it will be possible for you to afford the time. I should very much like also to be on this Council as I think I could be of some help in the matter of war supplies and also in organising Hindu public opinion. I mention this to you in case you can put in a word for me. I however do not want you to put yourself out in connection with this matter. I know you have always been extremely kind and obliging in every matter over which I have sought your assistance and this has emboldened me to write to you.



99. Views of Radical Congress Members

M.N. Roy to Rajendra Prasad, 19 October 1939, Valmiki Choudhary (ed.), *Dr Rajendra Prasad Correspondence and Select Documents*, Vol. 4, pp. 119-24

Dear Sir,

During the last [few] days, a number of active Congress workers holding radical views assembled here on my invitation to discuss the present political situation with the object of making recommendations as regards Congress policy in the present juncture, for the consideration of yourself and the Working Committee. Workers from seven Provinces representing the views of numerous active Congressmen participated in our deliberations. We were also benefited by written reports from, and statements of opinion of, many others who could not be personally present. On the last day of our deliberations, the Viceroy made his declaration. This abruptly changed the situation very considerably. Naturally, we discussed the possible consequences of the Viceroy's declaration, and made a judgment of the policy which, in our opinion, the Congress should adopt in the changed situation. I have been advised to make the following recommendations in that respect.

The Working Committee will have to make a very fateful decision. Therefore, it is the duty of all Congressmen to assist it with carefully considered opinion and helpful recommendations. This letter is written in that spirit, and it is earnestly hoped that the views stated herein and Working Committee the consideration they deserve.

True to its ideals of freedom and democracy, the Congress always condemned the violence and the aggressiveness of the Fascist Powers. No freedom-loving Indian could ever approve of the British foreign policy during the last year which aided and abetted destruction of freedom of weak and small nations. When finally the British Government abandoned that policy of connivance with Fascism, and declared its determination to bring about the end of Hitlerism, the Congress naturally expressed its sympathy for the object, and offered its readiness to help the attainment of that laudable object of freeing Europe and the world from the greatest menace of our time. Although Gandhiji was for cooperation with the ostensibly noble cause unconditionally, the Congress Working Committee felt that India could play her part honourably and most effectively only as a free nation.

The Viceroy's declaration makes two points abundantly clear: 1. The war and peace aims of the British Government are not what they were given out to be in the beginning of the conflict, or they have been radically changed in the meantime; 2. The British Government has categorically refused to accept the condition on which in the opinion of the Congress India could offer cooperation honourably. So, the Viceroy's declaration has created a situation in which the Congress attitude must radically change.

In the opinion of the Congress, India was concerned with the conflict in Europe because it was precipitated with the ostensibly noble object of destroying the Fascist menace. Now, the war and peace aims of the British Government, as declared by the Viceroy, and previous to that stated by the British Prime Minister in Parliament, are such as will involve Europe in a large-scale and protracted war, which will be a great calamity in every respect. According to those authoritative declarations, the war and peace aims of the British Government seem to be to restore the unstable status quo created by the vindictive, ill-conceived and iniquitous Treaty of Versailles. The creation of the States of Eastern Europe was not motivated by the Principle of the self-determination of nationalities, but by the strategic and imperialist considerations of the victorious Powers. Numerous national minorities were callously subjected to the domination of those states, none of which was an ethnological unit. The cause of the troubles and turmoils of post-war Europe can be traced to

the Versailles Treaty. In course of time, the unstable and iniquitous Versailles system broke down, throwing Europe in a state of Chaos in which forces of violence and aggression ran amuck. Having itself, over a period of years, connived with the practical repudiation of the Versailles Treaty, the British Government today wants to plunge Europe with another orgy of death and destruction for restoring that broken-down status quo. India can never be a party to such an enterprise. Unfortunately, India is still a part of the British Empire, and such she has been already involved in the war, but willing cooperation with the enterprise of the British Government is now altogether out of question for all self-respecting and liberty-loving Indians.

For another reason, India as represented by the Congress cannot approve of continuation of the armed hostilities in Europe. Although the British Government contributed little to the attainment of its object professed originally, Fascism as an international force, and German Nazism in particular, have suffered a heavy defeat at the hands of the Soviet Union. The Nazis have been compelled to abandon their long-cherished plan of expansion eastwards at the cost of the East-European peoples and finally of the Soviet Union. The Hitler-regime could command the support of a considerable section of the German people on account of diplomatic triumphs in the field of foreign policy and the glory of successful military feats. Thanks to the recent actions of the Soviet Union, it has been deprived of any credit on both the counts. The inevitable consequence will be serious weakening of the moral and emotional foundation of the Nazi regime which can be expected to be overthrown in course of time by the action of the German people, provided that it will not be reinforced by those very Powers which have been, by an accident, involved in a war with it. However, the plausible object of ending Hitlerism have been attained, to a large extent, the war in Europe has become completely useless, and cannot be of any concern for India.

In the situation, the immediate thing for the Congress to do is to throw its influence and the weight of its international prestige on the side of peace. On behalf of the Congress, as well as by Gandhiji personally, a fervent appeal should be forthwith made to the peoples of Europe, particularly of England and France, to demand an immediate termination of armed hostilities, and such a peaceful solution of the outstanding problems as would spare Europe the cataclysm of a large-scale war. The Nazi aggressiveness, which precipitated the present armed conflict, has been checked. The guarantee against any revival of the danger will be found in the recognition of the most salient fact of the present European situation, that the guarantee, if desired, can be offered only by the Soviet Union, the latter would willingly cooperate in any honest effort to keep the Nazism [at] bay, under check, and to help the German people to set their house in order. The suggested action on the part of the Congress will be the most valuable contribution to the Solution of the European crisis, and consequently will win for India the credit of giving the tormented world a courageous lead.

The appeal for an early termination of the war is sure to find a widespread response. Nevertheless, even in the 'democratic' countries, democracy may not be able to assert its sovereignty. In that case, India shall have no other alternative than to leave Europe to its fate, and turn her attention exclusively to her immediate task of winning freedom. The Congress should take up an attitude of neutrality. As a part of the British Empire, India has been involved in the war. But that alone does not guarantee willing cooperation of the Indian people. Let the British Government carry on its war, if our counsel will not prevail. Let us apply ourselves to the task of preparing the ground for the decisive battle in our struggle for freedom which, thanks to the possible development of international situation, may be fought with the greatest chance of Viceroy.

Now I permit myself the liberty of making some concrete suggestions regarding the execution of the policy outlines above.

Immediately, the Working Committee should resolve to issue the appeal for peace. Having issued it, there should be a country wide agitation in its support. The reasons for taking this step should be explained to the people from the Press platform.

When the Congress will be obliged to fall back on the alternative policy, we shall have to proceed with great caution and circumspection. Non-cooperation does not necessarily mean active resistance. This cannot be undertaken forthwith any great measure of success. All those who have the courage to face reality, and are not given to wishful thinking, must share Gandhiji's opinion that the country is not prepared for an effective resistance¹. That being the case, the wisest policy for the moment would be to avoid any premature clash. Any resistance, under the given conditions, would subject the country to an orgy of unrestricted repression: The Congress would be declared an illegal organisation; the framework of its organisation, built up laboriously over a period of years, will be destroyed by one blow; the leaders of the Congress together with thousands of active Congress workers will be imprisoned; the struggle for freedom will be practically suspended. That would certainly not be a desirable state of affairs. It would serve no purpose, because the suppression of Congress resistance would clear the field for the British Government to use India to the fullest extent with the willing cooperation of many Indians.

Any serious resistance must begin with the resignation of Congress Ministries in the Provinces. Otherwise, an extremely anomalous situation will be created in which Congressmen resisting India's forcible participation in the war will be persecuted by Congress Governments. But the resignation of Congress Ministries would create a very dangerous situation. Puppet ministries would be set up, and legislatures may be dissolved. There will be an orgy of unrestricted repression. Therefore, active resistance under the given conditions would do more harm than good to the cause of our freedom.

The implication clearly is that, while declaring its neutrality towards that conflict in Europe, the Congress should not withdraw its representatives in office. But, on the other hand, the Congress Ministries in the given situation should be actuated with an entirely different motive. Instead of willingly shouldering the responsibility of preparing the country for the defence against some imaginary invasion, the primary task of the Congress Ministries should be to protest civil liberties, particularly the freedom of Press, Platform and movement, against the ruthless operation of the Ordinances. If they do so determinedly, friction and conflict with the executive services would be inevitable. But those very factors could be eventually instrumental in quickening the popular spirit of resistance, thereby strengthening the Congress while weakening Imperialism. Ultimately, the Congress Ministries will have to resign, but by that time the psychological atmosphere and organizational conditions necessary for an effectively resistance will have been created.

Meanwhile, the most important thing to do would be to activate and strengthen Congress organisation throughout the country. For that purpose, the prevailing orientation must change. It is a deplorable fact that one of the evil consequences of Congressmen accepting office has been the growth of reformist illusions even among the masses. What is still more deplorable is that this illusion has been promoted by the systematic propaganda of Congressmen connected with ministerialist and parliamentary activities, and of many others under their influence. The scramble for offices and jobs are corrupting the entire organisation. Jealousy and rivalry in that respect are renten the Congress organisations by the consequent intrigues and factional fights. Having been asked to depend entirely upon the Congress Ministries for their salvation, the masses have practically forgotten the ideal of swaraj, the name is still mentioned, but what is really hankered after is some petty reform and benefits. If the country is not prepared for any effective resistance today, the cause of that deplorable situation is to be found in the wrong execution of the policy of office-acceptance. This must be corrected. The Congress Committee should be restored to their sovereign

authority. Activities of the parliamentarians in their respective constituencies should be subordinated to, and guided by, the local Congress Committee. That will inspire the lower Congress organisations, directly in contact with the masses, with the sense of authority and responsibility. That sense will be an activating factor, if the country is to be prepared for striking the decisive blow in the struggle for freedom, in the most favourable moment, which may come before long, the task must be entrusted to the primary Congress organisations. Today, they have practically nothing more to do than to function as the agencies for ministerialist propaganda.

If the Congressmen in office are actuated rather with the spirit of resistance than of cooperation, if they understand that efficient administration of the Imperialist State is not compatible with the ideal of the Congress, then the Congress Ministries can be very helpful for the Congress to take up the attitude of concern with the war, and apply itself to the task of preparing the country for the final struggle before long.

¹ Gandhi found the Viceregal declaration 'profoundly disappointing'. The Congress, he stated, 'asked for bread and it has got a stone.' *Harijan*, 21 October 1939. *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, vol. 70, pp. 267-68.

100. Liberals on Response to Viceroy's Statement

H.S.L. Polak to T.B. Sapru, 19 October 1939, Sapru Papers, File No. 5-2, NMML

I am greatly distressed at the nature of the immediate response of the Congress party leaders and Gandhi to the Viceroy's statement just published. I think that they have got hold of the wrong end of the stick. They are so obsessed by what they call Imperialism, and have blinded themselves to the Claims of other parties in the country, that it seems to me they are taking an absolutely unnatural attitude towards the proposals.

101. Policy of Repression

Secret Memorandum by Harry Haig, Governor of the United Provinces, Haig Papers, Acc. No. 2068, NAI

1. General Policy and tactics in the Province

In the present circumstances of the Provinces if the Governor assumes control under S-93 it will be essential to hit the extremists hard at once without waiting for further action on their part. They have already got a very considerable start. Whatever policy the Right wing may adopt, we can count on immediate and determined opposition from the extremists, and we must try to paralyze them at once and prevent them from becoming the instigators of widespread opposition. The types of men I have in mind are:

- (a) Known terrorist leaders;
- (b) Communist leaders;

(c) Irreconcilable left wingers, such as Bishambhar Dayal Tripathi, MLA, perhaps half a dozen other MLA's and certain others such as Premanand. My present intention is to pick up some 50 of these at once under rule 129 of the DI Rules, and subsequently proceed against them either on specific charges, for which in many cases material is available, or else by restrictive orders. This action, I should hope, would not only go a considerable way to paralyzing the extremists for the time being, but would be a great encouragement to Government officers, who would feel that they could depend on a vigorous policy.

There will remain a large number of local firebrands, particularly the violent speakers. I propose to let District Officers have a free hand in prosecuting these under Rule 38 and 34 (6) of the Defence of India Rules. The object will be to institute such prosecutions as may be necessary for maintaining order in the district and a peaceful atmosphere, and putting a stop to racial or class incitements, and also to check anti-recruitment activities and other actions which will impede the prosecution of the war. At the same time District Officers will be instructed to use these powers with discrimination and not to proceed in a mechanic way against persons who are not really dangerous, and above all, not to proceed against Congressmen as such at the outset. We must endeavour as far as possible to retain the sympathy of the right wing Congressmen. We must make every allowance for their position and not take advantage of speeches and actions to which they may be driven to some extent against their wish.

This action against extremists will provoke a certain amount of feeling, but we must put out a strong statement of our case against them and appeal to the reason of the moderate elements in support of its necessity. The removal of the leaders and prompt and judicious use of the DI Act should keep the rank and file in check. A main difficulty which we must expect is that of demonstrations organised by right-wing leaders. If allowed unchecked they rouse popular feeling and excitement. If prevented they bring us to the position which we wish to avoid of having to deal with mass movements. There is no easy way out of those difficulties, and there is considerable danger that we may gradually drift by this channel into direct conflict with the right wing. We must certainly expect some trouble at the outset, but it may perhaps die down from lack of interest later if we can handle it on the right lines, and after allowing some steam to be blown off.

2. Powers

In my opinion the powers given by the Defence of India Rules and the ordinary law would be sufficient to meet the initial strain of a section 93 situations. If matters came later on to widespread civil disobedience, it might be necessary to increase them, but at that stage there would probably not be the same disadvantage in enacting further powers. I agree that at the moment we should avoid bringing in the draft Revolutionary Movement Act and that it is unnecessary to do so.

In this Province the UP Special Powers Act 1932 is fortunately still in force and that Act gives ample powers to deal with a no-rent campaign. His Highness the Governor-General has already suggested one useful additional power which could be provided by a rule under the Defence of India Act, that of compelling newspapers to publish news and communiqué in a desired form. I agree that such an additional rule is desirable.

It seems desirable to consider to what extent the Central Government proposes to delegate any of its powers under the Defence of India Rules to Provincial Government of District Magistrate.

If later on it should come to a mass civil disobedience movement, difficulty is likely to be experienced in the speedy trial of cases, unless some provision can be made for summary courts such as could be constituted under Ordinance X of 1932 and were provided for in the draft Revolutionary Movements Act. These would not be necessary at the outset, but the possibility of their being required later on should, I think, be considered now and the necessary plans be made in advance.

3. War Board

I am hoping to constitute a war board which would concern itself with all activities connected with the war. It would be a large body consisting mainly of non-officials, with a few necessary officials. The work would be done by a small executive committee with an official secretary. I contemplate that the non-official members of this executive committee could be utilised to a large extent as a

kind of non-official shadow Cabinet. District war boards under the main war board would be set up for each district under the chairmanship of the District Officer. In this way I should hope to arouse interest in the objects of the war and activities in its support and to keep close touch with our non-official supporters throughout the Province.

The institution of District War boards should help to mobilize supporters and we shall need from the Centre the fullest information about the part which India is expected to play in the war and the opportunities for service which are open to those who wish to help us. In fact opportunities for service must be created in order to use and keep warm the very genuine enthusiasm which was appeared in many quarters but may easily fade away if not given some encouragement. A big [positive drive in favour of the war must be started and nourished by material advantages in the shape of employments and rewards. We must have an active constructive policy to oppose to that of the Congress which will catch the imagination.

4. Publicity

The importance of propaganda cannot be over-emphasised. We have a strong case, put during this period of negotiation little or nothing has been done to get it to the masses, though observers agree that Indian sympathies are definitely on the side of the allies in their struggle against German aggression. The problem must be tackled with the greatest energy from the outset. Sir J.P. Srivastava has promised me his assistance and advice in organising this branch. He has given it much study and there is probably no one in the Province who has a better grasp of the essential requirements or more practical experience of political propaganda work. We are fortunate in that of the five English dailies which mainly circulate in the province, three, *The Pioneer*, *Leader* and *Statesman*, are on our side and can be trusted to state our case adequately as against the *National Herald* and *Hindustan Times*. The Urdu and Hindi Press is mainly against us. It will have to be dealt with partly by the purchase of space and support directly or indirectly, and partly by control through the Press Act and the DI Rules. The vernacular Press is an extremely powerful influence on public opinion. There are few villages now to which a vernacular newspaper of some kind does not penetrate fairly regularly and the villager is far better informed and takes a far greater interest in political matters than he used to do. The success or failure of our propaganda machinery will depend greatly on the extent to which it can employ the medium of the vernacular Press for its own material and check the poisonous streams of abuse of Britain and the British Government with which a majority of the papers are now filled. I propose to appoint a senior British Officer at once as Director of Public Information, with Indian assistants and to make him responsible for both propaganda and Press control. It will take a little time however to get the Press side of the propaganda work going effectively. In the meantime the old district publicity organisation used in the Civil Disobedience Movement, must be revived in every district. I hope it will be possible to combine these organisations with the District war boards, which I contemplate setting up. These district publicity organisations must be used for the widest distribution of leaflets stating our case, and must also arrange as much verbal explanation of it by means of public meetings, itinerant lecturers and so forth as can be managed. The initial propaganda explaining the British Government's declaration, the reasons for the suspension of the Constitution, and the future policy of the Governor in regard to such matters as the Tenancy Legislation, and warnings against anti-recruiting speeches and other offences against the Defence of India Rules, must be taken up in this way as it is the way which can be most quickly developed. More subtle methods can be employed later but at the outset we must get the main facts of the situation out into the villages as quickly as possible and these are the most rapid methods.

5. Staff

Owing to the recall of officers from leave we are for the present well up to strength. I would not, therefore, press for the return of any officers from the Government of India immediately. Our present strength is, however, a maximum and as time goes on and it is reduced by casualties, leave in India and unforeseen demands, we shall feel the need of reinforcement. There are many individual officers with the Government of India who might be particularly useful and far more so than officers lent directly from other provinces without knowledge of our system and the local casualties, some of the younger men who have recently gone to the Political department might prove the most useful type of temporary re-enforcement.

6. Attitude of Government Servants

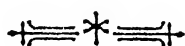
I do not anticipate that Government servants generally will have any reluctance in doing their duty against the extremist elements. Their loyalty as regards the war is beyond question, and I consider that there is no sympathy among them for the extremists and revolutionaries and that they look on these not only as troublesome posts but as dangerous and unscrupulous enemies both to their services prospects and to themselves personally if given any opportunity to injure them. If it came to action against prominent Right Wing leaders and men whose personal character inspires respect, there might occasionally be some hesitation, but I think that in the great majority of cases officials will do their duty fearlessly. This probability can be strengthened by good leadership and if they feel that we really mean business and intend that there shall be firm government until the war is won. The present regime has not won the confidence of any grade of the services, but has done much to cause them uneasiness. General official opinion would, I think, be quite favourable to a respite by a return to the old conditions with the chance that it might be prolonged.

7. Jail Accommodation

The elasticity of the jail accommodation of the province has recently had a severe test when room had to be found for over 10, 000 Shia prisoners from the *tabarra* agitation in addition to the ordinary population. The Jail department proved equal to the strain and, with this experience behind it, should be able to cope with numbers up to the extent of those imprisoned in the last Civil Disobedience movement. We hope, however, that the numbers will be very much less. The military authorities gave us valuable assistance in the case of the Shia prisoners by allowing us to use barracks at Sitapur and at banners which were not in use at the time by them. I understand from the GOC-in-C., Eastern Command that similar assistance will be forthcoming should it be required in future.

8. Deportation of Prominent Leaders

This would undoubtedly intensify resentment and should in my opinion certainly be avoided at the outset. If later on the situation greatly deteriorated and it became obvious that the break was irrevocable and that we were in for a prolonged and widespread conflict, deportation might then be advisable and necessary; but unless such a situation arises, I do not think that we should contemplate using them.



102. India and War

Fortnightly Report for the first half of October 1939, Home Department, File No. 18/10/39, NAI

[Extracts]

Government of Madras
Public (General) Department
Fort State. George
19 October 1939

My dear Conran Smith,

The War—There is no change in general attitude towards the war. Congressmen continue to wait on the final decision of the Working Committee and Socialist continue to make objectionable anti-war speeches and to advocate revolution, no-payment of taxes, refusal of money and recruits etc. Much of their speeches now consist in a justification of Russia's invasion of Poland. Some of the leading Congress Socialists from Madras City went on a speaking tour to Madura, Hamnad, Tanjore and South Arcot. Warnings administered to these men under consideration. East Godavari is still the worst district in the matter of anti-war speeches, but there have also been a number of in Anantapur; North Arcot; Guntur; South Kanara, Malabar and Trichinopoly. The Government is delaying drastic action only on account of a feeling that the atmosphere for a settlement with Congress may perhaps be worsened by such steps and because the speeches have made very little impression and the general sentiment is in favour of cooperation with the British Government in the War...

103. Lord Zetland's Apologia¹

SWJN, Vol. 10, pp. 203–06

28 October 1939

The Marquis of Zetland has spoken soft and soothing words and bestowed praise on all and sundry. He has not even forgotten Mahatma Gandhi.² Perhaps he did not know when he spoke in the House of Lords of what Gandhiji had said about the Viceroy's statement,³ or else he might have been less eager to pay a tribute to him. Some days ago Lord Zetland has referred in terms of patronising condescension to the Congress Statement, and we had heard the old voice of British Imperialism, hard and metallic to the ear. Foolishly many of us had imagined that Lord Zetland was of the old guard and did not represent of the spirit of the times and the new temper of the British people. Vainly we had expected more wisdom from other. But we were mistaken. The old imperialist guard holds the citadel in England and in India and its true authentic voice is that of Lord Zetland.

It is well that we recognise this now and shape ourselves accordingly. In the days to come, with all their trials and difficulties, our minds will be at peace so far as the British Government is concerned. We shall know that between us and them there is nothing in common, no meeting ground, no compromise. And if the British people are truly represented by this government and accept its policy, then we follow difficult paths in war as well as peace. Lord Zetland and his government have put the final seal on this bill of divorce, and the gulf that separates us is wider than the many oceans that intervene between his country and ours.

What is the theme of Lord Zetland's speech, the main burden of his argument?⁴ The root cause of difficulty in India is the conflict between various communities which will not agree in

spite of Britain's best endeavours. We know this conflict to our sorrow and cost. But what has been Britain's part in it, what is her part now? During these generations of British rule has she composed our differences or sought always to aggravate them? Every student of Indian history knows how this policy of divide and rule has been followed persistently, and how the seeds of conflict and division have been cunningly sown. As the popular movement has grown and nationalism has become a force, the communal problem has ever been intensified by British policy. Separate electorates were the creation of the British, and favour was shown to this group or that to wean it away from the rising tide of nationalism. The Round Table Conferences were significant examples of the art of side-tracking nationalism in favour of communal demands. Invite people, known and the unknown from the manner of odd groups, see to it that they are of the sort that cannot agree, give weightage to all the reactionary elements, and then proclaim to the world that Indians cannot agree among themselves.

This is the kind of round table conference to which we are again invited, or rather to which we might be invited 'if at the end of the upheaval caused by the war, when circumstances may well differ markedly from what they are today, there is a desire on the part of those concerned of modifications of particular features of the plan', then, in such circumstances, His Majesty's Government will be prepared to enter into consultation with representatives of the several communities, parties and interests in India and with the Indian princes, etc. We can well imagine that at the end of the war circumstances will markedly differ from what they are today, perhaps more markedly than the Marquis of Zetland would approve of. But whatever these circumstances that we shall have no desire to be invited and that we do not want any 'modifications of particular features of the plan', nor are we prepared for any consultations on the proposed basis, now or later. We shall have nothing to do with his round table conferences, and he is welcome to invite whom he wills to them. We recognise no right of the British Parliament or the British people to interfere with our affairs, and we speak to no one except in terms of the independence of India.

What was the Congress demand? The independence of India and the drawing up of India's constitution through a constituent assembly freely elected by her people. There was no claim for the Congress or for any community or group. If we believe in democracy, that was the only way. The minorities may legitimately ask for safeguards and protection. The Congress entirely agrees. Let us sit down and frame them. But that is no matter for the British Government or people. It is our concern.

Which minority, which group in India, can be or is opposed to this demand? The Muslim League stands for independence, the brave Sikhs will have nothing else, and so with others. It is true that there are individuals, hangers-on of imperialism or the possessors of special rights created by British imperialism, who fear a change. Is India's progress to be measured by the capacity to walk of the halt or the lame? Are we to wait till we have converted the feudal princes? That is what the RTC means. It is the spiritual home of all that has ceased to count in the world and India. But we who breathe the vital spirit of new India and draw sustenance from her awakened masses, what place have we in this assemblage of ghosts and shades?

Lord Zetland and his colleagues have conceived a new interpretation of democracy. Before anything is done, everyone must agree, or else the British Government will sit here comfortably and carry off the spoils. It is some such urge, we suppose, that induces them to wage this war.

We are told that some members of the Muslim League consider the Viceroy's statement as a political triumph for the League and a defeat for the Congress. It may be a defeat for the Congress, though we do not think so. We welcome it and are convinced that out of it good will come and the country will pull itself out of the quagmire in which it has got caught. The removal of a vain illusion is no defeat.

But we hesitate to think that any member of the Muslim League, whatever his communal views may be, can consider an insult to India and her people as a triumph for himself and his organisation. The Muslim League has sworn by the independence of India. Can they forget their pledge and take pride in alliance with imperialism?

In any event our path is clear. We shall rid ourselves of our encumbrances and get ready for the journey. The experienced traveler, who has a long way to go, takes little luggage, so that his march may be swift. We shall go our way, and there shall be no turning back for us, no regrets.

¹ Lucknow, 20 October 1939. Editorial in the *National Herald*, 21 October 1939. Reprinted in *China, Spain and the War*, (Allahabad, 1940), pp. 206–11.

² On 18 October 1939, Lord Zetland referred to Mahatma Gandhi as the most outstanding figure on the Indian political stage, ever ready to interpret to them the viewpoints and aspirations of the Congress and at the same time appreciate the British viewpoints and difficulties.

³ On 18 October 1939, Mahatma Gandhi, stated that the declaration made it clear that there was to be no democracy for India if Britain could help it. It simply showed that the old policy of divide and rule was to continue. The Congress has asked for bread and it had got a stone.

⁴ Zetland in a statement on 18 October 1939 had said that antagonism was the root cause of all difficulties in the domain of constitution-building in India and advised the people of India to strive for an agreement among themselves.

104. 'World War—Our Independence'

Swathantra Bharat, published by the Andhra Communist Party, Public (General) Department, 1939, Tamil Nadu Archives

20 October 1939

It is not yet two months since the World War broke out; and already one lakh of Germans and 4 or Lakhs of Poles had perished in the deadly warfare. By this time, the British Government had enlisted 30, 000 persons in the army from India for sacrifice in this war. The British Commander-in-Chief is gloating over his success in being able to gather so many Indians as it would be possible for him to send 1, 000 Indians per day to give up their lives in this war. It was also published that 25, 000 more Indians would be recruited for this war.

Rajas and Nawabs were causing obstruction to our fight for Independence from the date of our First War of Independence in the year 1857 upto this date. These traitors to the country were slaves to the British Government and were to the country were also offering their men and money to the British Government.

Is the Indian blood to be spent in this way? Are the Indian ryots and coolies who are emaciated and run down in health and wealth on account of their hard work and suffering for the sake of the white gentlemen for the last 200 years, to lose their remaining blood and lives still? This is not for getting rid of their slavery and for getting independence for India. This is nor for establishing a worker's ryots Raj, which would contribute for a new civilisation and a new living agreeable to all people. This sacrifice is on account of the war between the English and German capitalist robbers, who are bent upon dividing the world between themselves for their various benefits. Is the blood of the Indians to be spent in such wars?

Certainly it should not be spent like this. We are against this war. We will begin our fight for complete independence. Not even one man should go into the English army. Not even a pie should be given to the English Government. It is a pity that the Congress has not yet begun its fight for the country's independence, though the Congress stood for the purpose of getting independence...

As a reply to the questions of the Congress, the British Government, even without informing the Congress ministries, arrested the Germans in Bombay, quelled the strike in Digboi, and warned the Madras and Andhra Socialist Leaders against making anti-war propaganda and threatened them to be careful. It banned the Malabar volunteer Rally. It arrested Comrades Doctor Veerayya¹ and Lakshmipathy² who were engaged in picketing and begging the coolies at Cocanada not to join the army. The Viceroy was calling all parties and sects without any standing in the country and was engaged in interviews with them.

Therefore, the desire of the capitalist leaders in the Congress to come to a settlement with the British Government by getting a few concessions from them is only a vain one. The British Government could not grant the reforms to satisfy them. Even if granted, the other Congressites and hard-working classes in the Congress can't bear this treachery against the country. They will sound the war drum for the fight for independence. The Communists, Socialists and Subhas Bose for the Forward Bloc made known this matter to the Congress Working Committee.

Even though the Congress leaders take a wrong course, the course to be adopted by the extremist parties was clear. Large numbers of Congressites should be made to join in the struggle for independence. Even though the Congress leaders affect a compromise, this should be set at naught. The Congress should be maintained as the party for waging war for the independence of the country. We must make the whole Congress to begin the fight for independence.

(1) We should see that the Princes and Nawabs do not help the British Government by doing propaganda work among the people of the Native States. In Mysore the State Congress propaganda has already begun and a thousand people have already gone to jail. In Travancore they are going to begin Satyagraha.

(2) Anti-war meetings, processions, hartals and strikes should be carried out in every village and town of British India.

Agitation, strikes, satyagraha and fights should be begun for removing the day by day increasing difficulties of the ryots and workers.

Anti-war propaganda and anti-British Government propaganda should be carried on by means of public newspapers and hand-bills as far as possible. Secret newspapers and hand-bills should be published...

In Punjab, Ahrars are exhorting people not to join the Army. As a result, they are arrested and kept in remand one day and then released. But when such talk is made in villages, they are being sentenced to one year or more imprisonment under the Defence of Indian Act. 100 persons have been arrested so far.

An anti-war committee was formed in Bengal. In Calcutta Jute Mills, the workers were asked to work overtime for preparing more gunny bags required for the war. They agreed on the condition that they would receive war bonus in consideration of the rise in price. When the mill-owners refused, 50 thousand workers struck work. The Government sent out the labour leaders and especially the communists from the place of strike. When hand-bills supporting the strike were published, they arrested the Union President Comrade Bankim Mukerjee, and some others.

In Bombay, On 8 October, the labourers under the lead of Communist leaders carried out a strike, exhibiting their anti-war spirit. The Communist leaders expected 30 thousand labourers to strike work. But 90 thousand joined the strike. The Indian Government has to wake up and see. The merchants of the Bombay Stock Exchange began to say that the fight should be started either by Gandhi, if not by Red Flag people. This one example clearly shows how the people are advancing for the fight and how the leaders are lagging behind.

In Nagpur 30 thousand people were present in the Anti-Imperialist Association. They sent their resolution to the All-India Congress Committee and mediation. In Malabar, the District

Magistrate prohibited the Volunteer Rally of two thousand people. But the Malabar Congress leaders have decided to go ahead in disregard of the Government's orders.

After the advent of the Congress Government we got the people's right to some extent. It was possible for them to publish Communist ideas and principles and to spread the spirit of independence among Andhras. After the declaration of War, the Indian Government proclaimed six Ordinances. The liberty of the people and the press were trampled down to the dust. Therefore secret newspapers are necessary to disseminate Communist ideas and to carry on India's fight for independence. The Andhra Communist Party undertook to publish *Swanthanthra Bharat* for this purpose. But, this is not a Communist paper solely. The other extremist parties, who are for carrying on the struggle for freedom at this time of war and who want to lead the people in that course, realised the need for such papers as this. In course of time this paper will be published as a common paper with a circulation of 300. Readers should read the contents of the paper to all people and hand over the papers to others for being read by them and thus help its wide publicity. We pray for full monetary help to make this a weekly issue.

The Viceroy's statement came out as a disappointment to those who were thinking that the British imperialists were fighting for the preservation of democracy; and as an awakening to those who were dreaming that independence would be granted to India with grace... This declaration shows with what amount of callousness and indifference the imperialists were treating the Indian People. The moderates, who wanted to affect a compromise in their illusion, should have at least by this time realised the true nature of the imperialist leaders. It is the habit of servile dogs to lick the feet of the master who kicks them and it is never the way of the soldiers of freedom. The Congress should begin its fight for Swaraj at once as an answer to the Viceroy's insolent reply to the Indian people, and in order to completely destroy the British Imperialism.

¹ In each of the Congress provinces, except Assam, the assembly passed a resolution similar to the 14 September resolution. Thereafter, all the ministries resigned. Between 27 October to 15 November, the ministries in Madras, Central Provinces, Bihar, UP, Bombay, Orissa and the NWFP had quit.

² On 9 June the British Cabinet accepted the Viceroy's proposal of a War Advisory Council. On 21 July the government in Delhi announced the expansion of the executive council and the formation of a War Advisory Council. Representation of Indians on the Executive Council was increased from 3 to 8.

105. Sapru on Congress and the Viceroy's Statement

Sapru to Jwala Prasad Srivastava, 21 October 1939, Sapru Papers, File No. 5/S-2, NMML

Thank you for your letter of the 18th October. I am really very sorry that I cannot be at Lucknow on the 8th of November. I have got an engagement at Delhi with the Dowager Maharani of Baroda and I must be there. It is a professional engagement. You will be most welcome to come and stay with me on Sunday the 29th.

As regards the Viceroy's statement I am not at all surprised that the Congress should be in such a furious state of mind. From the start the Congress have bungled over this affair. They had no business on a critical occasion like this to say that they represented every one. Jinnah took up the challenge and he has succeeded, so did the Hindu Mahasabha and so did many others. I am, however, sorry that the Hindu Mahasabha is taking a line which shows that it cannot make up its mind. What is the good of its saying that it is disappointed with this Declaration? Could any Declaration be made which would satisfy the Congress, the Muslim League and the Hindu Mahasabha and others alike.

I do not think that the Congress Governments are going to resign. Probably there will be further interviews between the Mahatma and the Viceroy and some sort of a face-saving formula

devised on the strength of which the Congress will decide to give a further trial to the British, that is to say, to stay on. If they do, however, resign it will mean very serious trouble to every one but it will also mean that they (the Congress) will lose their prestige, power and influence. They will never succeed in their attempt at civil disobedience. The British will not tolerate in war times what they have tolerated in peace times. I do not think, therefore, that the resolution which is going to be moved in the Legislative Assembly will be moved on the 26th, but if it is moved you should plainly state what your point of view is. Say that you like Dominion Status to be established at once but you would also insist that the conditions necessary for the establishment of self-government must also be established or restored.

I know nothing about the personnel of the War Advisory Council. So far as I am concerned I have neither the time nor the inclination to go on any council or Committee. If, however, I have any voice in the matter or I am consulted I shall be glad to back you up.

106. Wardha Session of AICC

National Front, 22 October 1939

22 October 1939

At no other time in the history of the Indian National Congress a more important issue had been before the Nation than the one that was discussed at Wardha on October 9, 1939. As Communists and Socialists the issues on which we desired a clear verdict of the Congress were;

- (1) The nature of the war.
- (2) How exactly in the present conditions India could help the world forces of progress and democracy, thus paving the way for the new world socialist order of which she was to form an important part.

On both these issues the official resolution before the AICC and the previous statement of the Working Committee, as also the speeches of the leaders who spoke in favour of the resolution lacked clarity. Failed to give a decisive lead to the nation and left the initiative in the hands of British Imperialism.

Most astounding and contradictory statements regarding the nature of the present war were made by those who spoke in favour of the official resolution. The statement of the Working Committee and the resolution notwithstanding, the interpretations which the 'Compromisers' gave to these could lead the Congress and the nation straight on to the path of capitulation before imperialism.

'The Congress has passed resolutions about war repeatedly. We have now to decide what our attitude towards the present war is going to be...

'The English Ministers and the King, have made statements regarding this war. They have said that they have embarked upon this war to protect the small nations from Nazi aggression. Poland, a small nation has been attacked by Germany. We have declared our sympathies to be with Poland...

'But we have not understood the real aim of the War. Is it really a war for democracy? Or is it going to be like the last war?

'England must declare in unequivocal terms her war aims. The British Government can issue a statement easily. If the statement is clear then giving effect to it would not be difficult....

'The present attitude of the British Government is not particularly agreeable to us. We were dragged into the war without our consent; Ordinances were issued without consulting the provincial ministries whose powers were thereby curtailed...

Still on our behalf we want to give the British Government an opportunity to consider all these things....

Many unforeseen things are happening in these days. No one could foresee that Russia and Germany would unite to partition Poland... (Was that a pathetic hope latent in the heart of the President, that Indian nationalism too might somehow come to terms with British Imperialism?)

A speech which failed to enlighten, which created illusions and which made to mention even of preparedness on our part even in case the statement of Britain's war aims did not satisfy us....

Nehru moved the official resolution. He began by emphasizing the enormous importance of the occasion; the difficulties of a very complicated situation. 'Your decision,' Nehru told the members of AICC. 'Would affect the history of India.... The AICC should *sit en permanence* to deliberate upon and decide the important problems as they arise from day to day....

He went on, 'I consider the statement which we have issued to be good.

We also met the Viceroy—an unusual step as far as we are concerned. Steps which we have so far taken are correct.

'Yet I am afraid of the future difficulties—we may slip. We are walking on sword's edge.' Mistakes may be made by us; and our decisions will have serious consequences yet we have to go forward.... The present war is caused by Nazi aggression. But it is wrong to say that others are guiltless. If you believe it to be so you show your lack of understanding....

The other two speeches which Nehru delivered did not add anything to the arguments contained in his first speech. Briefly, Nehru admitted that the war was an imperialist war so far as the British Government was concerned, nevertheless, if British imperialism conceded our demands that would mean the end of Imperialism. This would also change the character of the war, in which case the possibility of India helping with her resources the democratic forces of the world was not ruled out. Wherein lies the dangerous fallacy in this argument? Firstly, it lies in the fact that Nehru imagines it to be a possibility, however remote, that the present British Government, headed as it is by Chamberlain, can concede to Indian nationalism its demands to the extent of uprooting imperialism (i.e.) itself in this country. Second, Nehru when he talks of our helping the world democratic forces is unable to say clearly that unless the present ruling clique in England and France is removed and replaced by a genuinely popular Government in those two countries, the present war cannot be turned into a war for freedom and democracy and against Fascism. He is unable to see clearly that the only possible way India could help the world democratic forces, was by refusing to aid Chamberlain and co. in anyway in their war, and thus help the democratic working class forces in England and France to change their respective imperialist rulers. Unless this is done no collective security (with the USSR as its main pillar) is possible. Unless this is done this was and remains an imperialist war and it is our duty to oppose it clearly, unequivocally and relentlessly. That is our national and international duty.

And precisely because neither Nehru nor the Working Committee's statement or resolution are clear on these points—that it was possible for Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and Satyamurthi to make the speeches which they did. The 'slippery path' of which Nehru spoke could be discerned clearly through the thin veil of words. Which these leaders weaved round the official resolution.

Sardar Patel who seconded the resolution, began by admitting that although the resolution on war had been passed by the Congress for many years yet he had not taken any notice of time. It was considered to be a fad of Nehru.

Listening to this speech one felt that here already the 'spirit' of the resolution was being violated by the seconder himself. In spite of all protestations here indeed was bargaining; concede our demand, if you want our help! That is how the question was posed to the British Government. Not only no regard was paid to the resolutions on war passed by the Congress for the last four years,

not only was the nature of this war was completely forgotten, the imperialist and pro-fascist acts of the British Government mentioned in the statement by the Working Committee were quietly ignored and our support to Britain pledged beforehand.

The speech of Satyamurthi in support of the resolution was not unexpected. No liberal could have done better. He was loud in his sympathies for poor, Poland and to quote his own words 'hence with England'. He regretted that British Statesmen did not rise to the occasion and respond to Mahatma's offer of unconditional support to Britain.

Satyamurthi, notwithstanding loud cries of 'no' and 'shame' went on to assert that this was not an imperialist war. England has only to make a gesture of goodwill to India.

And as far as Satyamurthi was concerned he expressed doubts regarding the feasibility of the immediate application of the principles of democracy of India in view of war conditions. All power should be concentrated in the hands of Mahatma Gandhi and ministers should not be asked to resign.

Incidentally he denounced the Soviet Union also, which he called 'imperialist'.

Here indeed was the culmination of the Rightist line. Of course, Satyamurthi does not perhaps represent the dominant Right, his attitude towards the present crisis, nevertheless the fact that he could give his own interpretation to the Working Committee's resolution in this manner showed the inherent unsoundness of the stand of the Working Committee.

The fact that Jawaharlal the sponsor of the resolution declared the present war to be imperialism in character, and another gentleman who supported the same resolution declared that he did not believe it was an imperialist war and others like Sardar Patel and Rajendra Babu refused to give their opinion about the nature of the war, showed clearly that perhaps in an attempt to achieve unanimity of main question, without settling which we cannot proceed one step ahead, has been left vague. The result is that endless possibilities of compromise with imperialism and of our becoming the humble servitors of British Capitalism in the present international crisis opened up.

Jayaprakash Narayan moved the Socialist amendment. While generally supporting the official resolution the amendment sought to make it clear that the Congress would not only be unable to accept any piecemeal advance towards Indian freedom, but would also refuse to entertain a settlement of the issue of freedom which pledged in advance the country's support in this war. The amendment further wanted that immediate effect be given to the Congress policy as enunciated in earlier resolutions.

In moving tones Jayaprakash declared that only one meaning could be put to the previous Congress resolutions on war. It was to oppose war. 'We know', said Jayaprakash, 'Imperialism can't fight for world salvation'.

The aim of the war was not to establish democracy. If new democratic forces arise in England, Germany and France, and the Governments of these countries really espouse the democratic cause then we may help them. In strengthening our own democratic forces we would be helping the world democratic forces.... You would not be removing the root causes of Imperialism if you help the Governments of Chamberlain and Daladier. The argument that if Indian independence is declared we would to that extent weaken British Imperialism is not correct.

What we get in this manner can also be taken away by the same agencies—witness for example the Government of India Amendment Act. There is only one way out: tell the British that they may shoot us down but we shall not help them.

We must steel our hearts for struggle. We shall go forward not by helping the British Government but by opposing them. This would be according to Congress policy.'

Jayaprakash's speech created a good impression; its feeling and sincerity were patent. Yet the speech lacked the socialist understanding of the situation. Nehru's argument, regarding the

democratic point were not fully met and furthermore beyond saying that war should be opposed at all events no concrete steps were suggested as an alternative to the line of 'wait and see' which the Working Committee has adopted. Sajjad Zaheer supported Jayaprakash in a short speech. He expressed the view that our worst fears regarding the possibility of a compromise were confirmed after hearing Sardar's speech. Chamberlain and Daladier has betrayed world democracy, their pretensions about fighting for the freedom of Poland were false for it is they who by refusing a pact with the world's greatest democracy the USSR, had thrown that poor country to the wolves. The imperialists were fighting for the maintenance of the status quo. Only by attacking imperialism here could we help the release of democratic forces in the world, specially in England and France where Fascism was spreading its tentacles.

The Left nationalist point of view was put forward by many speakers of the Forward Bloc: Sardar Ardul Singh Caveeshar, Ranga, Vishambhar Dayal Tripathi, Bishambhar Dayal Pande, Algu Rai Shastri, Nuruddin Bihari. These speakers generally demanded that all compromise talks with the Viceroy should forthwith end, that the policy of opposition to imperialist war repeatedly declared by the Congress should be strictly adhered to; the spirit of defeatism manifest among the leaders should be liquidated, struggle should be launched.

'If the present leaders could not lead' threatened Ardul Singh 'to the great indignation of Jawaharlal who interrupted constantly, others would come forward and lead.'

Niharendu Dutt Majumdar (Forward Bloc) delivered an intensely emotional harangue wherein he urged that the old war resolutions of the Congress should be adhered to, and struggle should be launched to implement the Tripuri resolution on National Demand.

'Nehru had befogged the issue—To raise the question of British war aims was irrelevant—we should be clear about our own national objectives. Daladier and Chamberlain were suppressing freedom in their own counties e.g. the suppression of the Communist Party of France. They were plotting against the great citadel of world democracy, the USSR. Finally, Dutt Majumdar pleaded for the raising of the National Militia by the Congress Ministries for which purpose they were to raise big loans.

Bankim Mukherji moved the Communist amendment to the resolution. 'The war aims of Britain were known to the Indian people. This was really a war for Colonies. Imperialism is our main danger. Sardar was not even ashamed to admit that he had not read Congress resolutions on war. You have not prepared the nation for struggle still the Indian masses are ready. If you want the nation will go forward, you may or may not...'

Somnath Lahiri (Communists) made an effective exposure of the suppression of Civil Liberties in Madras under Rajagopalachari who has threatened to ban Congress agitation regarding war.

There is very great anti-war sentiment in the country, all this discontent should be organised. We should declare for struggle, clearly fully and unambiguously today.

Sardesai (Communist) pleaded for international solidarity of the people, defended the policy of the USSR which was destroying Fascist growth in Europe and said that 'neither imperialism nor Fascism should be supported but that through the defeat of both these strive for a free England, free Germany, and free India'

Although the Communist speakers did not put their case as which they moved were the only one which showed how concretely the next step forward could be taken by the nation. The amendments showed that the campaign against the imperialist war, against the ordinance regime, the resolution on States struggle, boycott of British goods, refusal of Ministries to submit to ordinances, should be our next moves.

Jayaprakash Narayan's amendment was put to the vote first and was lost by 181 to 64 votes. Votes were not counted on the other amendments. The Working Committee's resolution was passed by 198 votes to 58 votes.

When we left the hall the final impressions on our minds were that the Congress leadership, at this most critical juncture, has again failed to give the nation a decisive lead; that the nation was left in the unenviable position of 'wait and see' with initiative in the hands of the Imperialists.

The left, through its disunity, through general lack of ability to impress the alternative line which it placed before the nation concretely, has shriveled up.

107. The Gandhists Against Gandhism

Editorial, *Independent India*, 22 October 1939

22 October 1939

Gandhiji's article on the 'tragedy of the situation' is a very significant document which throws some light on the war and peace policy of the Congress leadership, and gives us a glimpse of what is really happening behind the beautiful screen of dignified but vague pronouncements.

The doctrine of non-violence is the basic principle of Gandhism. His followers have declared that 'non-violence is the sheet-anchor of the Congress.' Their financial adherence to the doctrine not only justified persecution of all non-conformists and dissenters, but also went to the extent of actual commission of violent acts (Chirala shooting, shooting of the workers in the Bombay, firing upon the Muslim demonstration in the same city) on the pretext of preserving an atmosphere of non-violence. There has been a premeditated plan and a persistent effort to purge the Congress of all undesirable elements on the ground that these dare to criticize the 'creedal article'. Ostensibly, for the sake of Gandhist Catholicity, serious encroachments have taken place on the internal democracy of the Congress, weakening it alarmingly in consequence. Even some of the most outstanding admirers and collaborators of Gandhi have professed implicit faith in the efficacy of his new technique although they did not fully subscribe to his doctrines of social peace and the quaintness of his views in other matters. All these pretenders want to create the impression that the doctrine of non-violence has been accepted by the present leadership of the Congress not as a policy, but as the guiding principle of all, publicly wondered whether the Poles would not have fared better if they had adopted the technique of non-violence of military resistance.

But at last we are informed by Gandhi himself that the impression was wrong; 'that our fight has not been one of non-violent resistance of the weak'. Having revealed this very significant fact, he laments: 'There is no spontaneous response in our heart at this supreme moment to an undying faith in the efficiency of non-violence.' He is not speaking for himself, he staunchly stands by his faith and would travel alone the 'lonely path'. He speaks in sorrow of his being deserted.

While categorically disowning any desire for the application of violence only for the sake of it, we have always criticised the cult as irrelevant to the purposes of the struggle for political freedom and social regeneration, so long as the world remains as it is. Risking the displeasure of the apparent converts to the sublime cult, we have dared to suspect cowardice behind the creed and have exposed how it could serve as a convenient instrument in the hand of those opposed to any radical change in the established social and political relations. For that, we have been condemned as corrupted by the Western spirit of Materialism which is supposed to have degraded the European nations to a state where only the law of jungle can rule. But now Gandhi himself bears it out that we have not been very far from the truth. For the Gandhist Congressmen, non-violence 'has been passive resistance of the weak'. But what is still more significant and positively alarming is that the

present leaders of the Congress would throw down their mask of the piously professed creed not because it has proved to be ineffective in our struggle for freedom; they would do so for co-operating with the imperialist rulers of our country on the pretext of protecting India against an imaginary danger.

The ground for this contention is provided again by Gandhi who cannot be suspected of making unfounded allegations against his disciples and trusted Lieutenants. He writes, 'If the Congress helps the Allies in her capacity as representative of non-violence she will give to the Allied cause a prestige and a power which will be invaluable in deciding the ultimate fate of the war. But the members of the Working Committee have honestly and bravely not made the profession of such non-violence. 'Why have they chosen to depart from the path supposed to have been pursued until now with the apparently implicit faith that alone could lead India to her goal? With this characteristic frankness, Gandhi gives the answer, while those making the fateful decision prefer the undemocratic and highly reprehensible procedure of committing the Congress to a policy positively antagonistic to its declared object without letting the entire organisation know what they are really doing. Not only non-violence but truth also is being thrown overboard.

The skin-deep conversion is disowned not for the sake of a more effective struggle for freedom, but, on the contrary, for co-operating with Imperialism in military preparations for defending even India's present status of a British dependency. According to Gandhi, the present leaders of the Congress have decided upon the following policy:

Whether there is, on the part of the British Government a favourable declaration or not, the Congress has to decide upon the course it would adopt in the event of an invasion of India. For, though there may be no settlement with the Government, the Congress has to declare its policy and say whether it would fight the invading host, violently or non-violently.

Nor is there much room for doubt about the choice which the Congress leaders would most probably making in the face of an imaginary danger. Gandhi relieves us of the burden of speculation, and shatters all illusions about the implications of the present policy of the Congress leaders. 'The tragedy of the situation is that, if the Congress is to throw in its lot with those who believe in the necessity of armed defence of India, the past twenty years have been spent in vain'. This statement apparently does not mean that the decision has already been made; there is the 'if' on which the incurable optimist might still pin their faiths. But that is a forlorn hope. It seems that the Congress leaders in spite of the pathetic plea of their preceptor, have come to the conclusion that, 'whatever may be the attitude of the British Government, the Congress must throw in its lot with those who believe in the necessity of armed defence of India'. Who are these over-zealous well-wishers of India'? Apart from the British, India has so many martial races within her borders. They will want to put up a fight for the country which is as much their as ours'. Gandhi informs that his refractory followers are in favour of cooperation on its ground.

India is a British possession, therefore, it is natural for the British to defend her as such. Gandhi writes: 'Defence of India on the present lines has been necessary because she is an appendage to Britain. Very correctly, he goes on to point out that free India can have no enemy. Although this assertion cannot be made so very categorically it is an obvious fact that the possibility of a free India being invaded is very remote. The imaginary danger has become a nightmare only to those who, owing to their reactionary social orientation and blind prejudices, are incapable of differentiating the Soviet Union from the Old Tzarist Russia. The feared invasion of India is militarily possible only in the case of the Soviet Union being the invader. But it is time for the Indian nationalist to know that free India will have in the Soviet Union, not a dreaded aggressor, but the staunches friend and the most powerful ally.

As regards the Indian "martial races" those who claim to be their leaders have already pledged their support to British Imperialism in whatever adventure it may choose to undertake. Therefore, these "martial races" will defend India, in case of invasion, as a British dependency. Therefore, their attitude need not be imitated by the Congress which should be concerned only with the defence of a free India, and whose concern for the moment is to secure the freedom to be defended eventually. But Gandhi reveals the disquietening fact that the Congress leaders are seriously contemplating cooperation in military preparations, "even though there may be no settlement with the Government". Any such participation would obviously not be for the defence of free India; it would amount to defending India as a British dependency that is to say, a defence of British imperialism.

Gandhi also is alarmed by the possibility of Congress leaders adopting this policy. Therefore, he points out the dangers and grave disadvantage, for India, implied in it. He writes, 'if the masses of the South and the Centre (also) wish to become militarized, the Congress which is supposed to represent them, will have to enter into competition with the, (Muslim of the North, Sikhs and Gurkhas). The Congress will then have to be a party to an enormous military budget. There may be all these things without the Congress consent. It will make all the difference in the world whether the Congress is party to them or not'. It seems all these weighty considerations have not weighed with the Congress leaders who have attained their present position mostly as faithful followers of Gandhi. They may choose to disregard the advice and not share them is givings of their chosen mentor, that is their lookout. But will India be benefited by the policy they are contemplating to adopt? Will it be conducive for the attainment of the object of the Congress? That vast bulk of the Congress membership today practically excluded from determining the policy of the Congress, must seriously ponder over these grave questions, and should not hesitate to give expression to their considered opinion.

The questions should be considered in view of the fact that the British government response to the demand of the Congress has not been very favourable. Although no official pronouncement has yet been made, the prolonged silence itself is significant. Besides, authoritative British press organs have reacted adversely to the Congress attitude. Obviously, the British Government is temporizing as regards a settlement in India, while there is still some chance of an early termination of the hostilities in Europe. In that case, the British Government would be in no hurry for a settlement in India, and the Congress will have failed to avail of a splendid opportunity, because its leaders would not take the initiative.

But if the war in Europe continues, the Congress is already practically committed to cooperation, 'though there may be no settlement with the Government. The scare of a imaginary invasion has driven the Congress leaders to abandon the profession of non-violence; that has been done 'honestly and bravely'. Yet Gandhi deplored the Development.

Curiously enough, the scare of an imaginary invasion is being spread by the Congress press organs representing the view of the Congress leadership. Even before the British Government responded to the demand made on behalf of the Congress to define its war and peace aims, these organs are committing the Congress to cooperation, with other purposes than the original purpose of helping the overthrow of Hitlerism. Our leaders are still naively asking for definition of the war and peace aims of the British Government, but they have already been made clear. In that respect the British Government has shifted its position. The object of the war is no longer of Hitlerism, but to restitute the artificially created (by the Versailles Treaty) States of Eastern Europe under the protection and patronage of the Western Powers, so as to serve either as a bulwark against the possible spread of revolution to Central Europe or as a base of aggressive operation against the Soviet Union as soon as the harmony among the capitalist States-Fascist as well as democratic will

be reestablished. Some of the leading press organs reflecting the opinion of the Congress leadership are enthusiastically supporting the new, clearly counter revolutionary, war aims of the Allied Powers.

Indians are developing a morbid affection for the semi-Fascist Poland which ruthlessly suppressed other nationalities. They are even demanding that the Russian and Ukrainian minorities should be handed back to the tender mercies of the resurrected Polish State with Imperialist pretensions. They are already visualizing the present European conflict developing into a fierce clash between two antagonistic systems. Although the British Government has so far been scrupulously discounting active participation of the Soviet Union in the present conflict, the press in the country is putting Bolshevism and Fascism in the same camp against which the war for democracy and freedom should be waged. It is argued that in that case the Soviet Union might invade India, and the latter must be prepared to defend herself. Given the unaccommodating attitude of the British Government there is no chance of India's becoming a free nation before the consummation of the hypothetical possibility. That being the case, the sum total of the policy the Congress leadership is tending to adopt, is cooperation in the military preparation for defending the British dependency of India against the imaginary invasion by the Soviet Union.

Few honest nationalists would endorse the policy when its ominous implications are grasped. They should all urge upon Gandhi to assert himself so as to prevent the commitment of the Congress to this dangerous policy. True to its own political ideal of freedom and democracy, the Congress must help the struggle for the destruction of Fascism. That laudable object has been attained to a large extent by the diplomatic and military moves of the Soviet Union. Having done absolutely nothing in that direction the Allied Power, for the sake of prestige, may go to extent of plunging whole Europe in an orgy of violence and destruction. The Congress can never be a party to that. As a matter of fact, it should make a supreme effort to prevent that catastrophe.

Let Gandhi in his personal capacity as well as the accredited spokesman of the Congress appeal to the English and French democracies to raise their sovereign authority to compel their respective Governments to adopt more peaceful methods of creating the guarantee against future aggressions upon small and weak nationalities. Such an appeal is bound to find a widespread response. By taking that step, the Congress will render a great service to the European peoples menace with wholesale massacre and destruction. Consequently, India will rise high in the estimation of the world and her power to conquer her own freedom will proportionately grow.

108. 'Struggle of Death': India and the War

Editorial, *National Front*, 22 October 1939

22 October 1939

The Decision of the Wardha AICC meant, in one word, that the policy of 'wait and see' was to be continued. The door for negotiations was kept open, the leadership was eager for a compromise. The question remained would imperialism respond? Only a gesture was asked for and a declaration for the future. For a scrap of power, for some concessions now, the leadership was willing to stake the future of our national movement—its vital unity, its very aims.

Throughout the country the forces of immediate struggle have been growing. More meetings and bigger meetings than we have even known before were spontaneously being held on the basis of one simple demand—the Congress must give the call for struggle. The 2nd October strike of the Bombay workers' was more than a straw. A day before the AICC, 50 thousand citizens of Nagpur has mustered for the anti-imperialist Conference. Reports that came through showed that

the whole country-side was agog, in almost every village where Congressmen lived a meeting has been held on the present international crisis and the call for struggle had met with tremendous response. People everywhere, from all corners looked for a lead from the supreme national organisation of the country.

But the leadership escaped giving the call, it continued the stalemate and scored and a great majority, generally the voting the AICC used to be 3 to 1, but at Wardha it was 4 to 1. How is it that the widespread and undoubted sentiment of the masses for struggle did not express itself adequately in the Wardha deliberation?

Only one aspect of the policy of wait and see was visible at Wardha—that there was to be no immediate struggle. The majority of delegates of the session who are local leaders and occupy politically centrist positions argued like this: a compromise is not possible, why hurry, if the leadership can take us near our goal without a struggle, why not give it a chance?

But they failed to realise that stalemate would end in surrender, for what was behind it was a whole policy, the policy of compromise—this was not seen. This policy was already spreading demoralization in the national ranks, as was evident enough in the atmosphere at Wardha—instead of clarity of vision and intense realisation of coming struggle there was confusion and threat of an imminent disruption of our national movement.

The Left failed to rise equal to the occasion, it could not break through the democratising stalemate. It gave no clear, concrete and united lead. The Congress Socialists jumped out of the Left Consolidation, they were not prepared to work hand in hand with an historic occasion, a world war itself. But this situation brought to the fore and accentuated our differences instead of leading us on to greater unity on the basis of struggle. Why?

War is an international event and Left unity crashed before it because it has not yet reached a stage to have a unified international outlook, an ability to understand national events in their international setting. The Congress Socialist Party became the instrument of breaking up Left unity and more, even Socialist unity itself, because it has not yet achieved within its own ranks a unified international Socialist outlook. Masani and his group has opposed efforts for left and Socialist unity. A little while ago they had stood isolated inside their own Party. The disastrous consequences of this course only began at Wardha. Just at the movement when the fate of the nation depends on all-round unity and above all on our ability to forge a United Socialist Party the Socialist movement stands split and the CSP is content with the prospect of 'launching a nation-wide satyagraha under the leadership of the Party.'

In fact, this was not the slogan of the CSP alone, a considerable section of Left nationalists were also thinking along the same lines. It was the Left nationalists line itself, being a reflection of the acute conflict within our national front. The leadership was moving towards compromise, as a reaction to it left nationalism was blindly flying towards the course of adventurism. In this welter of confusion of Communists alone insisted that a real national struggle is possible today through the Congress only and that the immediate task is to break the stalemate, prevent a compromise through intensified political agitation on a guerilla warfare basis with the definite political objective of creating conditions in which the Congress itself takes to the path of struggle and along with it the whole nation.

The policy of compromise had reached a decisive stage, it was no more an aim but a practical proposition. It had already encouraged Left adventurism. The next step was disruption of the national front. This was the prospect at Wardha.

The leadership wanted a compromise. It has taken steps towards it. Would a compromise be really achieved? The answer rested with imperialism.

The Viceroy has now given the answer in his statement. There could be no greater insult and insolence. The leadership wanted of war-aims, Chamberlain quoted for their benefit; they wanted that the goal of India be defined, they are referred to the 1919 and 1935 Parliamentary declarations. Imperialism refuses to budge, even one inch. For the successful prosecution of its war it needs greater and not less military and economic control of India and its resources. It cannot afford to conciliate Indian nationalism. It cannot go beyond talking seductively. This is the plain meaning of the Viceroy's statement.

A compromise has not come about, not because our leadership did not want it and work for it but because imperialism could not afford it and would not have it. An immediate compromise is out of the question because Imperialism has put its foot down. It wants complete surrender.

Because a compromise is out of the question it does not mean that we are out of the woods. The compromisers do not want a real full-blooded national struggle. A compromise has been prevented but the policy of compromise has not been isolated but its advocates still constitute the national leadership.

How would the policy of compromise work itself out now? In trying to escape launching a real struggle our leadership may be forced to withdraw Ministries and they may just go into the wilderness and not give the call for a nation-wide mass struggle on the ground of unpreparedness. [latest news from Wardha confers this as we go to press]. This will be leaving the initiative entirely in the hands of imperialism, to proceed to cut up our movement into pieces through terror, this in its turn would amount to opening wide the flood gates of demoralization.

The existing sweep of the mass movement, the struggle of the Left and the insolence of Imperialism is more likely to force the leadership to some sort of struggle almost entirely on the old satyagraha model, fill up the jails and that's all.

There is no other way except the whole Congress going into opposition to Imperialism. The leadership will attempt to escape and restrict struggle. The whole burden of struggle will fall on the rank of file....

109. All-India Anti Imperialist Conference: The War and Our Task¹

National Front, 22 October 1939

During the last six years, British Imperialism consistently and systematically sabotaged every attempt to build up collective security, abetted and encouraged Fascist aggression and sacrificed the Independence and freedom of small and weak countries. The Haripura Session of the Indian National Congress unequivocally condemned the policy of British Imperialism and pointed out that because of this policy, the danger of Imperialist war was increasing. That is precisely what has happened. Nazi Imperialism which the reactionary Chamberlain Government strengthened in the hope of directing its attack against the Soviet Union began to threaten the Imperialist interests of Britain itself. This conflict has led to the outbreak of the present imperialist war.

The present war is being fought by the Governments of Britain and France not in the interests of freedom and democracy but in order to retain the Capitalist and Imperialist status quo. This is proved by the anti-democratic and semi-fascist dictatorships that have been established by Chamberlain and Daladier in their own countries. It is further proved by the promulgation of the Defence of India Act by the Viceroy and the Amendment to the Government of India Act, 1939, which virtually destroys whatever power the Provincial Governments have, and place India under the dictatorship of Britain.

Humanity has been plunged into this orgy of mass slaughter by the rival Fascist and Imperialist powers. Mere military defeat of German Imperialism will not lead to the elimination of Imperialist

rivalry or the establishment of real peace and the emergence of a world order based on democracy and freedom. That goal can be achieved only by the destruction of both Imperialism and Fascism, by the victory of the German people over their fascist rulers, by the overthrow of the present reactionary Governments of Britain and France, by the smashing of the chains of Colonial slavery, by the victory of forces of democracy and freedom. In this world-wide struggle against Fascism, Imperialism and war, the Indian people will join hands with all democratic forces, with the heroic people of Germany who are fighting against the horrors of Nazi rule, with the oppressed Czechoslovakia, Austrians and Poles, with those forces in Britain and France who are resisting the anti-democratic and imperialist policy of Chamberlain and Daladier, and with the Soviet Union which has been the most consistent defender of the cause of peace and whose effective intervention has frustrated to a great extent the aggressive plans of Fascism and Imperialism.

The Indian people cannot and will not act as the tools of British Imperialism for the retention of the Imperialists status quo. On the contrary, they will resist every war measure and strive for their own freedom. By resisting the exploitation of India's men, money and resources for war purposes, by achieving their own independence and by weakening, British Imperialism which is the bulwark of world reaction, the Indian people will be able to make their most effective contribution to the cause of world peace and democracy. A free India shall determine her own foreign policy and shall gladly enter into voluntary alliance with other nations for maintaining peace and checking aggression. This has been the declared policy of the Congress.

No steps, however, have been taken by our National leadership as yet to give effect to that policy.

Waiting for Imperialism to make a gesture, asking British Imperialism to define its 'war-aims', carrying on protected negotiations with the representatives of the British Government and all the time refusing to organise resistance to Ordinance Regime and other war measures and even acquiescing in their operation have been the chief features of the policy of the Congress leadership. Decision is being postponed and no call for any form of mass action is being given.

Any further continuation of the policy, any further delay in organising resistance to Britain's war measures and launching the struggle for freedom, any further waiting for elucidation of Britain's 'war-aims' would leave the initiative in the hands of imperialism, create widespread demoralization in nationalist ranks, intensify conflict within the national front, strengthen the forces of compromise and communal reaction and pave the way to ignoble surrender.

This calamity can be averted and national unity can be achieved only on the basis of uncompromising resistance to war, only by the adoption of a policy of immediate nation-wide struggle against the Ordinance Raj and against every measure, on the one hand, and for the attainment of independence and democracy on the other.

Today the nation is in an immensely strong position. With Congress Ministries in eight provinces, with the unrivalled sway and influence of the Congress over the people, with the labour and present, youth and student organisations leading millions prepared to join hands with the Congress in the anti-war struggle, with the States people's movement once again gathering strength and with the rising indignation against War among the masses, a nation-wide offensive against Imperialism today has greater possibilities of success than even before.

This anti-imperialist Rally, therefore, appeals to the All India Congress Committee to take these factors into consideration and adopt immediate measures to launch a nation-wide struggle against war and against Imperialist domination.

¹ The anti-Imperialist rally was held at Nagpur on 8 and 9 of October under the Presidentship of Subhas Bose. The rally was attended by leaders of the Forward Bloc, Communists, All-India Kisan Sabha, and All India Students Federation and Majlis-i Ahrar.

Over 30,000 persons attended the rally, including a large number of Muslims. Subhas Chandra Bose and Maulvi Habibur Rehman of the Majlis-i Ahrar delivered speeches.

After the rally, a consultative meeting of the leaders of various parties was held with Bose in the Chair and the resolution was prepared. This resolution was moved next day at the next meeting of the consultative Committee by Vishambar Dayal Tripathi, M.L.A member of the Working Committee of the All India Forward Bloc, and unanimously adopted.

On the second day, the rally was held under the Presidentship of Swami Sahajanand Saraswati in the absence of Bose who had left for Delhi. The resolution was translated into Hindustani by Dandekar of Nagpur and was duly moved by J. Bukhari, Joint Secretary of the All India Kisan Sabha, and seconded by Sane, Secretary Congress Municipal Party of Sholapur, Indulal Yajnik, Joint Secretary of All India Kisan Sabha and S.Y. Kulkarni, Joint Secretary of Nagpur Textile Union spoke in support of the resolution. The resolution was unanimously adopted amidst slogans of 'Inquilab Zindabad'.

110. Congress Working Committee Resolution, 22 October 1939

CWMG, Vol. 70, pp. 419-20

The Working Committee are of opinion that the Viceregal statement in answer to the Committee's invitation for a clear declaration of Britain's war aims, particularly in their application in India, is wholly unsatisfactory and calculated to rouse resentment among all those who are anxious to gain, and are intent upon gaining India's independence. This invitation was made not only on behalf of the people of India, but for millions of people all over the world, who were weary of war and violence, and Fascist and imperialist systems which exploited nations and peoples and were ultimately the causes of war, and who yearned for a new order of peace and freedom. The Viceregal statement is an unequivocal reiteration of the old imperialistic policy. The committee regard the mention of the differences among several parties as a screen to hide the true intention of Great Britain. What the Committee has asked for was a declaration of war aims as a test of Britain's *bona fides* regarding India, irrespective of the attitude of opposing parties and groups. The Congress has always stood for the amplest guarantee of the rights of minorities. The freedom the Congress claimed was not for the Congress or any particular group or community, but for the nation and for all communities in India that go to build that nation. The only way to establish this freedom and to ascertain the will of the nation as a whole is through a democratic process which gives full opportunity to all. The Committee must, therefore, regard the Viceroy's statement as in every way unfortunate. In the circumstances, the committee cannot possibly give any support to Great Britain, for it would amount to an endorsement of the imperialist policy which the Congress has always sought to end. As a first step in this direction the committee calls upon the Congress Ministries to tender their resignation.

The Committee earnestly appeals to the nation to and all internal controversies in this hour of great crisis, and to act unitedly in the cause of India's freedom. The Committee calls upon all Congress Committees and Congressmen generally to be prepared for all developments and eventualities, and to show restraint of word and deed to that nothing may be said or done which is not in keeping with India's honour or the principles for which the Congress stands. The Committee warns Congress against any hasty action in the shape of civil disobedience, political strikes and the like. The Committee will watch the situation and the activities of the British Government in

India, and will not hesitate to guide the country to take further steps whenever the necessity for this arises. The committee desire to impress upon all Congressmen that a programme of resistance, commensurate with the magnitude of the issue before the country, requires perfect discipline within Congress ranks and the consolidation of the Congress organisation.

The Working Committee realises that the non-violent resistance offered by the Congress in the past has sometimes been mixed with violence. The Committee desire to impress upon all Congressmen that any resistance that may have to be offered must be purged of all violence, and to remind them of the pledges taken to this effect as early as 1921, during the Congress Session at Ahmedabad, and repeated on many subsequent occasions.

111. The Working Committee's Decision

Editorial, *Tribune*, 24 October 1939

24 October 1939

The Congress Working Committee has arrived at the expected, though not quite logical, decision that the Congress ministries should tender their resignation. The decision was not unexpected, because the statement made by Mahatma Gandhi and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru about the inevitableness of the Congress going once again into the wilderness and the still more categorical statement of the Congress President that the 'Congress ministries could not last' had fully prepared the nation for it. It was not quite logical from the Working Committee's own premises. What are the facts? The Congress has not originally made any demand for a fresh declaration of British Policy with regard to India. The national demand was already there, and the Congress had not considered it necessary to put forward any fresh demand. On the contrary it has definitely and resolutely turned down the leftist proposal that an ultimatum with a time-limit should be addressed to the British Government, failing a suitable response to which the Congress might resort to such measures as it might consider necessary and proper for the realisation of its objective. Had things continued to proceed in the way they were doing there would ordinarily have been no occasion for changing the policy of the Congress at this stage, and no question of a resignation by the Congress ministries would have arisen at the present time.

The only new factors in the situation were the outbreak of the European war and the appeal made by the Viceroy and the king to India to cooperate in the prosecution of that war. It was in reply to this appeal that the Congress had made a demand for a clarification of Britain's war policy, and in particular for a statement as to whether it did or did not intend to apply to India the principles for the preservation of which it has professedly embarked upon the war. The failure of the British Government to make a suitable response to this demand could logically lead to one consequence and only one, and that was the withholding of that cooperation with the British Government which the Congress was admittedly anxious to render but which it had definitely made contingent upon a satisfactory reply to its demand. This is admitted by the Working Committee itself. After stating the facts of the case and analyzing the Viceroy's statement in the light of its own demand it says: 'In the circumstances it cannot possibly give any support to Great Britain, for it would amount to an endorsement of the imperialist policy which the Congress has always sought to end. As a first step in this direction the Committee calls upon the Congress ministries to tender their resignation.... When the Working Committee said that it could not give any support to Great Britain, all that it meant and could mean was that it could not give any support to it in the prosecution of the war. No occasion had arisen for its making a wider or more general statement. And yet in the next sentence the Committee did make such a statement. Instead

of merely saying, as it would have been perfectly justified in doing, that the Congress Governments could render no active aid to the British Government in the prosecution of the war, it called upon those Governments to lay down their offices, thus reversing, without any logical justification the whole policy it has been following during the last two years with such great success.

Not that the illogical character of the Working Committee's conclusion necessarily makes a difference to the actual position. Even if the Working Committee has decided that the Congress Governments should refuse or declare their inability to render any active aid to the British Government, instead of actually tendering their resignation, the British Government would, in the event of a prolongation of the war, have had no choice left except either to give the Congress what it has been asking for or to call upon the Congress Governments to resign or in the alternative to dismiss them. No Government can fight a war of the magnitude of the present one with elements in its own ranks virtually, if passively, in revolt against itself. But the war might not, after all, be prolonged, and the British Government might, for the duration of the war, choose to forego the help of the Congress-governed provinces rather than provoke a constitutional crisis over the greater part of India. In that event it would still have been possible for the Congress to follow the course originally chalked out by itself, and there would have been no occasion for it to suspend the operation of the political, social, educational and industrial programmes which the Congress Governments have been trying to carry out. If it is not too late we would still urge the Committee to look at the matter from this point of view and, if possible, so to alter its decision as to make it possible for the Congress Governments to follow the course suggested by us.

Having said this, we must proceed to make it clear that we are emphatically at one with the Working Committee in its view of the Viceroy's declaration. The declaration, it rightly observes, is wholly unsatisfactory, and it is undeniable that the mention of the differences amongst the several parties in India is nothing else but a screen to hide the unwillingness of the present British Government to concede India's just demand for constitutional independence. 'What the Congress asked for', says the Congress, 'was a declaration of the war aims as a test of Britain's bonafides regarding India, irrespective of the attitude of opposing parties and groups.' The freedom the Congress, it adds, 'was not for the Congress, or any particular group or community, but for the nation and all the communities that go to build the nation.' In the circumstances it was both absurd and disingenuous not to concede the demand of the Congress on the spurious ground that it did not represent the whole people. It does represent their whole of India in posse, though not in ease. But even assuming that it did not, how could that fact affect its claim to put forward a demand for the whole of India, when as a matter of fact it demanded nothing for itself but everything for the nation i.e. for the communities, classes and interests composing the nation? Only those could repudiate its claim who did not believe in freedom and democracy. There may be some such people in India. But is the existence of such people to deter England from applying to India the principles of freedom and democracy, for the preservation of which it is professedly fighting the forces of totalitarianism generally and Nazism in particular in the present war? Were there not some people in Czechoslovakia and in Poland, a constituted by the Treaty of Versailles, who did not look upon Germany's action as wanton aggression, who on the contrary, welcomed it? If that fact did not prevent the British Government from looking upon Germany's annexation of Czechoslovakia and her invasion of Poland as utterly unjustifiable acts of aggression, have they the slightest justification for disputing the claim of the Congress to speak for India, who it only demands for the latter to status of a constitutionally independent country?

There was only one course open to the British Government if they wanted to do the right thing. That course was to concede the Congress demand in full and to declare that at the end of the war steps would be taken either to so modify the Government of India Act in the light of

Indian opinion as to make the new constitution acceptable to India or to help to people of India themselves to draw up a free and democratic constitution for India, in either case with a view to her being placed within the shortest possible time on a footing of perfect equality with other self-governing members of the British Commonwealth of Nations; that in the war, the affairs of the Central Government generally and its war policy and war activities in particular would be so conducted as to command the sympathy and support of the elected representatives of the people both in the provinces and at the centre; and that a suitable machinery would be established at the centre to give immediate effect to the second half of the declaration. Such a statement, while satisfying the Congress, would have given no cause for justifiable offence to any minority community, class or interest, because it would have left the whole question regarding the constitution of the future free Government of India open and undecided, and would have made it possible for the minorities, both communal and political, to put forward their demands at the right time. This is exactly what the British Government have not done. Instead they have, as in the past, made the existence of those difference in India, which they themselves or their agents and representatives in India have in the past been largely instrumental in bringing into existence, a ground for the denial of that freedom to India in which all sections and classes of the people are equally interested. Is it any wonder that the declaration should have evoked feelings of the keenest dissatisfaction and indignation in all patriotic quarters in India?

112. Congress Policy and Strategy: The Viceroy's Assessment

Viceroy to Secretary of State (Tel.), 25 October 1939, Linlithgow Papers, Acc. No. 2335, NAI

[Extracts]

(The) Congress Working Committee has laid it down that Congress Ministers shall resign office as soon as the War Resolution (to be moved on varying dates) has been debated. But it is clear that there is no anxiety on their part to take precipitate action, and I remain of (the) opinion that Ministries, though they will obey the order of the High Command, will be very reluctant to surrender office. (The) Working Committee appears anxious to avoid civil disobedience, though I doubt whether in the event of a break the saner elements would very long be able to hold the position. Congress continues to insist that my statement is inadequate and press for acceptance of their full demands as regards independence of India as indicated in their resolution of 9–10 October. I think at the same time that Gandhi's statement in the *News Chronicle* of yesterday suggests a desire on his part to keep the door open and a slight uneasiness as to the possibility of a break, though you will observe that he concludes by again reaffirming that 'pursuit' of 'complete independence' must continue to be the goal. His statement incidentally again suggests that one of our objectives in war is the preservation of democracy. It might be worth disposing of this in [House of Commons] debate.

Muslim feeling continues to be represented by the League resolution. I regard it as essential this connection to clear in debate the two points mentioned in my private and personal telegram of 22 October. You will also have seen my official telegram of 24 October, giving an account of Fazlul Huq's attack on Sarkar, and his reassertion of extreme Muslim position. Jinnah's recent article in *Manchester Guardian* of 21 October is also relevant. As you will have seen he emphasizes in this that democracy in India 'can only mean Hindu Raj', strongly reasserts Muslim objection to Congress claim to represent the people of India and urges essential necessity of agreement with minorities in respect of any constitutional change, and need for reopening constitutional position from the beginning...

As regards the proposed Consultative Committee, Congress continues to regard it as inadequate and the *Hindustan Times* urges that it should be abandoned as having no general appeal. Muslim League has reserved opinion pending consultation envisaged in my statement... and further elucidation of what is involved. Sikander in his speech on 23 expressed the view that the ready help and co-operation of the Princes could be looked for.

General position, as I see it, is that Congress though not happy at the thought of a break, are still maintaining their extreme claim. I suspect that the underlying reason is Gandhi's anxiety to preserve the unity of Congress. But apart from that, a good deal of face is now involved in any climb down on their part, given the publicity which has attended their demands for assurance for independence, etc. They would, I am sure, relinquish office with reluctance. But I do not feel any doubt, as at present advice, that failing some accommodation, they would do so and that we shall in the majority of Congress Provinces have to resort to Section 93. While Muslims are generally co-operative, one cannot feel too certain as to what terms Jinnah may not ask as the price of co-operation when we get down the specific examination of the position. I am not disturbed about (the position of other parties. We can rely on the Europeans, and we know where the Princes stand.

Objectives of Congress I shall be rather disposed to put in descending order as:

- (a) General declaration of freedom or independence or promise of Dominion Status immediately after War, without any qualifications as to what exactly is involved.
- (b) Undertaking on our part that we should abide by any arrangement that represented (an) agreement between Indian parties.
- (c) Expansion of Centre (rather less emphasis is now being laid on demand for Congress majority).

As regards (a) I would only say again that I am certain that it would be foolish and short-sighted to try to avoid our present difficulties by general phrases, implications and reactions of which on other communities and on our own position have not been fully explored and accepted.

As regards the second objective of Congress no doubt is to put themselves in a position on which they can pillory Muslims and the Princes, as the sole obstacles to achievement of India's highest ideals. It has to be remembered too, that any such proposition stated in its broadest form takes no account of our responsibilities for safeguarding minorities, and the services, of matters such as commercial discrimination, or of the safeguarding of the very substantial British financial interests in this country, or of the financial obligations which have been undertaken by or on behalf of India. I need not develop here arguments, which are so familiar to you, against (the) Constituent Assembly proposition.

As regards the third alternative, I have indicated my general view in my private and personal telegram of 24 October. But it would be essential before we talked of expansion of the Centre to have reached some sort of understanding between the rival communities. Indeed I do not believe we should get Muslim concurrence in any expansion save on prior understanding not only as to the strength of representation of various communities, etc., but quite conceivably as to Muslim Claims in the Provinces, etc.,

It must be for you and for Hoare to determine the right tactics to adopt in the House in the light of turn of debate takes which I of course am not in a position to appreciate...

Subject to that, I would again urge:

- (a) That we should try to clear the two Muslim points referred to in paragraph 3 above and give Jinnah utmost possible reassurances as regards minorities.

- (b) That we should reaffirm our Dominion Status commitment and deal with the Liberal Federation point referred to in paragraph 4 above.
- (c) That we should again emphasize that it is our sincere desire to spare no effort to achieve agreement between the great communities; and that it is only if that agreement can be achieved that any real advance or understanding in this country can be looked for; that it goes without saying that in circumstances in which agreement existed between those communities (the) task of constitutional advance would immensely facilitated.
- (d) (This would give me a valuable card of re-entry for which I should be grateful) that as the House is aware, no effort has been spared locally in India by the Governor-General, acting on behalf and with the approval of His Majesty's Government, to try to reach a common basis of agreement; but that the marked divergences of view, which would be obvious to anyone who has read the appendices to the white paper, and the statements made by Gandhi on the one side in the *News Chronicle* and Jinnah on the other in the *Manchester Guardian* has so far proved an inseparable obstacle: that the Governor-General however continued to consider with the utmost care in what way he could make any further contribution to turning this difficult corner. Something of this kind would obviously greatly facilitate my task in picking up threads if it was decided that it would be wise to take action later on the lines suggested in my private and personal telegram No. 2385-s., and it would, in any event, ease the tension here if it was felt that the door was not yet closed.
- (e) I have turned over in my mind whether assuming that Cabinet would be prepared to consider some expansion of the Centre, it would be worth hinting at this in debate. But my considered opinion is against this. I do not think we have been able to explore the ground sufficiently, and I am certain that the wise course would be first to try to secure some common basis between the communities.
- (f) As regards consultative group I suggest that we should avoid committing ourselves as regards details, but strongly emphasize proof of our desire to associate public opinion with the conduct of the war. Possibility that we might have to reconsider proposal if Congress would not play and Jinnah demanded impossible terms as price of doing so has of course always to be considered. But I would not think it well to mention this in debate.

I would only add in conclusion a point, to which you are I know fully alive, that at this difficult moment when difficult to concede and when the Muslims on the other hand are prepared to co-operate on a basis which would appear to admit of acceptance, we should avoid swapping horses, or doing anything which might, lose us Muslim support before we have secured that of Congress on terms which could be regarded as acceptable. It goes without saying of course that if we get the support of both, nothing could be better. But that is not the immediate position.

113. The Lesson

Editorial, *Independent India*, 29 October 1939

29 October 1939

The reaction to the Viceroy's statement of British policy has naturally been varied. It has been characterised by indignant protest, unwarranted disappointment, sympathetic criticism, qualified approval and downright support. The disharmonious chorus having subsided, it is now time to ascertain what lesson should be learnt from the bitter experience.

We do not speak for those Indians who accept India's relation with the British Empire as providential or, at any rate, the most desirable arrangement, and try to justify that humiliating relation with the fond hope of attaining equal partnership in some indefinitely distant future. We speak for the much more numerous section of the Indian people who will lose nothing but their chains when this relation will eventually be broken. For them, the Viceroy's declaration has been a bitter experience. It should not have been so. Because, the Viceroy has not said anything which could not be anticipated by those alive to the realities of the relation and striving for the goal of complete national independence, fully conscious of the implications as regards both parties involved in the relation. However, the experience has been bitter and disappointing, though very largely due to our fault of running after a utopia, unmindful of the rude realities of a political relation.

The perspective of the development of our struggle for freedom was clouded and confused by the belief in the possibility of the foreign rulers of India voluntarily transferring real political power to the representatives of the Indian people. This belief cannot be shared by those who regard politics as a human affair and, therefore, cannot expect it possibly to be altogether free from mundane considerations. Gandhi introduced this belief in the Congress. Since the great bulk of Congressmen believe in him, they simply included in their credo the belief in the possibility of the slave-holder setting the slaves free in the fullness of time and out of the fullness of heart. Now Gandhi himself appears to have realised that he expected too much of human beings who are still very far from being gods. Of course, admittedly being an incorrigible optimist, he tenaciously holds on to the faith in his ability to bring about a change of heart, even if these are made of stone. Faith moves the mountain; why should it not melt the stone?...

The question, then, is, what are we to do in the meantime? That 'a while' will be indefinitely prolonged if we are to judge by the Viceregal pronouncement. And even when that term will be eventually over, India will perhaps be a British Dominion! A patient long trek from the humiliating position of dependency to the slight improved status of a Dominion is that the perspective before us? It is certainly not an inspiring perspective.

But Gandhi's leadership is really versatile. Only his orthodox followers lack the boldness of vision necessary for traveling on the risky road even when pointed out by him. He is generous enough to admit that all may not share his optimism and his implicit faith in the innate goodness of man which must prevail in the long run. Therefore, determined to plough a lonely furrow according to this faith, he allows his followers to choose the human course of action, if they so desire. We shall do him the highest honour if we can muster courage to act according to our own conviction just as he does according to his. But unfortunately, in most of us the courage is lacking, and we justify our cowardice and weakness by pretending to follow Gandhi implicitly without sharing his faith.

In reply to an appeal made by *The Times of India*, that he would 'seek clarification on the Viceregal declaration', Gandhi, among other things, said the following:

Independence is not to depend upon British or anyone else's mercy. It will come when the people are ready for it. Evidently, British statesmen think that the people of India are not ready. The Congress or any other organisation that seeks to represent the millions has to consolidate its strength and resources for that purpose.

That is the only way out of the present impasse. That being his opinion, Gandhi should not have allowed the Congress Working Committee to raise the illusion that her present rulers can ever be expected to recognise India's status as an independent nation, and get involved in a wordy duel which was bound to end as it has done. However, better late than never. We hope that, at last Gandhi would persuade his followers to give up the futile chase after a utopia and apply themselves to the task so appositely indicated by himself.

If the Congress has understood this supreme task and gone about it without any mental reservation, perhaps today we might be in a position to give a fitting reply the Viceregal pronouncement. Indeed, in that case, the Viceroy would not have the occasion to make this humiliating declaration. No use complaining that we asked for bread and have been given a stone. We should give up the habit of asking which in our present position amounts to begging. We should have self-confidence necessary for the determination to fight our own battles and win them irrespective of whatever others may say or wish. The present experience will be fruitful if it can inspire us with this spirit.

Unfortunately, other assertions made by Gandhi himself simultaneously with the above instructive pronouncements may hinder the Congressmen from learning the lesson of this experience, and thereby prevent them from developing the spirit of self-confidence and determination on which Gandhi wished to inspire in them. For example, in his message to the *Times of India* he says: 'Surely what the Congress wants is easy enough to give, if the will is there. I miss the will in the Viceregal declaration' that is very dangerous assertion. It cannot be reconciled with the statement that 'conquests are not surrendered'. Of course, Gandhi has his own peculiar way of explaining these apparently contradictory views. But lesser men can neither follow his method of reasoning nor believe in the possibility of doing two diametrically opposite things at the same time.

The danger involved in the statement of Gandhi is that it makes the Congress ideal very cheap. If it is what it is proclaimed to be, namely, complete national independence, evidently, that is not easy enough for England to give. The hypothetical will to give cannot be expected to be there within a measurable future in as much as India will not cease to be a profitable concern for her foreign rulers within that time, nor is the least sign of repentance as yet discernible. That being the case, what is really wanted, by the Congress, is according to Gandhi, something much less than complete independence because otherwise he could not possibly believe that to be easy enough for England to concede.

Are we, then, to lower our ideal simply because our rulers as yet refuse to be inspired by it? If we did that, the lesson would not be learnt, and the bitter experience will be in vain. It should be evident by now that there is an irreconcilable divergence of views between ourselves and others regarding the future of India. We want to be free in every sense of the word. Our rulers benevolently propose to teach us the art of governing ourselves under their angelic protection. Can any consideration, moral or religious persuade us to be reconciled to that humiliating position of the traditional, 'white man's Burden'? We shall have to be in that position if we still enter in any illusion about the abundantly clear will of our rulers. That dangerous illusion must end, if the Congress is to apply itself seriously to the task of preparing the country for securing freedom as advised by Gandhi himself.

114. India and the War—What should the Congress do?

Extracts from an open letter to the President, Indian National Congress, addressed by M.N. Roy in pursuance of a resolution of the Central Executive Committee of the League of Radical Congressmen, *Independent India*, 29 October 1939

29 October 1939

The Working Committee will have to make a very fateful decision. Therefore, it is the duty of all Congressmen to assist it with carefully considered opinion and helpful recommendations. This letter is written in that spirit, and it is earnestly hoped that the views stated therein and

recommendations made will receive from yourself and the Working Committee the consideration they deserve.

True to its ideals of freedom and democracy the Congress always condemned the violence and the aggressiveness of the Fascist Powers. No freedom loving Indian could even approve of the British foreign policy during the last year which aided and abetted the destruction of freedom of weak and small nations. When finally the British Government abandoned that policy of connivance with Fascism, the Congress naturally declared its determination to bring about the end of Hitlerism. The Congress naturally expressed its sympathy for the object, and offered its readiness to help the attainment of the laudable object of freeing Europe and the world from the greatest menace of our time. Although Gandhi was for co-operation with the ostensibly noble cause unconditionally, the Congress Working Committee felt that India could play her part honourably and most effectively only as a free nation. The Viceroy's declaration makes two points abundantly clear: (1) The war and peace aims of the British Government are not what they were given out to be in the beginning of the conflict, or they have been radically changed in the meantime; (2) British Government has categorically refused to accept the condition on which, in the opinion of the Congress, India could offer co-operation honourably. So the Viceroy's declaration has created a situation which the Congress attitude must radically change.

In the opinion of the Congress, India was concerned with the conflict in Europe because it was precipitated with the ostensibly noble of destroying the Fascist menace. Now, the war and peace aims of the British Government as declared by the Viceroy's and previous to that stated by the British Prime Minister in the Parliament, are such as will be a great calamity in every respect. According to those authoritative declarations, the war and peace aims of the British Government seem to be to restore the unstable status created by the vindictive, ill-conceived and iniquitous Treaty of Versailles. The creation of the States of the Eastern Europe was not motivated by the principle of the self-determination of nationalities but by the strategic and imperialist considerations of the victorious powers. Numerous national minorities were subjected to the domination of those states, none of which was an ethnological unit. The cause of the troubles and turmoils of post-war Europe can be treated to the Versailles Treaty. In course of time, the unstable and iniquitous Versailles system broke down, throwing Europe in a State of chaos in which forces of violence and aggression ran amuck, having itself, over a period of years, connived with the practical repudiation of Versailles Treaty, the British Government today wants to plunge Europe into another orgy of death and destruction for restoring that broken down *status quo*. India is still a part of the British empire, and as such she has been already involved in the war. But willing cooperation with the enterprise of the British Government is now altogether out of question for all self-respecting and liberty-loving Indians.

For another reason, Indians as represented by the Congress cannot approve of continuation of the armed hostilities in Europe. Although the British Government contributed little to the attainment of its object professed originally, Fascism as an international force, and German Nazism in particular, have suffered a heavy defeat at the hands of the Soviet Union. The Nazis have been compelled to abandon their long-cherished plan of expansion eastwards at the cost of the East European peoples and finally of the Soviet Union. The Hitler regime could command the support of a considerable section of the German people on account of diplomatic triumphs in the field of foreign policy and the glory of successful military feats. Thanks to the recent actions of the Soviet Union, it has been deprived of any credit on both the fronts. The inevitable consequences will be serious weakening of the moral and emotional foundation of the Nazi regime which can be expected to be overthrown in course of time by the action of the German people, provided that it will not be reinforced by those very Powers which have been, by an accident, involved in a war with it. However, the

plausible object of checking Hitlerism having been attained, to a large extent, the war in Europe has become completely useless and cannot be of any concern for India.

In this situation the immediate thing for the Congress to do is to throw its influences and the weight of its international prestige on the side of peace. On behalf of the Congress, as well as by Gandhi personally, a fervent appeal should be forthwith made to the peoples of Europe, particularly of England and France, to demand an immediate termination of armed hostilities, and such a peaceful solution of the outstanding problems as would spare Europe the cataclysm of a large-scale war. The Nazi aggressiveness which precipitated the present armed conflict has been checked. The guarantee against any revival of the danger will be found in the recognition of the most salient fact of the present European situation, that the guarantee, if desired, can be offered only by the Soviet Union. The latter would willingly co-operate in any honest effort to keep Nazism at bay under check and to help the German people to set their houses in order. The suggested action on the part of the Congress will be the most valuable contribution to the solution of the European crisis, and consequently will win for India the credit of giving tormented world a courageous lead.

The appeal for an early termination of the war is sure to find a widespread response. Nevertheless, even in the democratic countries the democracy may not be able to assert its sovereignty. In that case, India shall have no other alternative but to leave Europe to its fate, and turn her attention exclusively to her immediate task of winning freedom. The Congress should take up an attitude of neutrality. As a part of the British Empire, India has been involved in the war. But that alone does not guarantee willing co-operation of the Indian people. Let the British Government carry on its war, if our counsel will not prevail. Let us apply ourselves to the task of preparing the ground for the decisive battle in our struggle for freedom which thanks to the possible development of the international situation, may be fought with the greatest chance of victory.

Now I permit myself the liberty of making some concrete suggestions regarding the execution of the policy outlined above.

Immediately the Working Committee should resolve to issue an appeal for peace. Having issued it, there should be a countrywide agitation in its support. The reasons for taking this step should be explained to the people from the press and platform.

When the Congress will be obliged to fall back on the alternative policy, we shall have to proceed with great caution and circumspection. While declaring its neutrality towards the conflict in Europe the Congress should not withdraw its representatives in office. But, on the other hand, the Congress Ministries in the given situation should be actuated with an entirely different motive. Instead of willingly shouldering the responsibility of preparing the country for the defense against some imaginary invasion, the primary task of the Congress Ministries should be to protect civil liberties, particularly the freedom of press, platform and movement, against the ruthless operation of the ordinances. If they do so determinedly, friction and conflict with the executive services would be inevitable. But those very factors could be eventually instrumental in quickening the popular spirit of resistance, thereby strengthening the Congress while weakening Imperialism. Ultimately, the Congress Ministries will have to resign, but by that time the psychological atmosphere and organizational conditions necessary for an effective resistance will have been created.

Meanwhile, the most important thing to do would be to activate and strengthen Congress organisations throughout the country. For that purpose the prevailing orientation must change. If the country is not prepared for any effective resistance today, the cause of that deplorable situation is to be found in the wrong execution of the policy of office-acceptance. This must be corrected. The Congress Committees should be restored to their sovereign authority. Activities of the parliamentarians in their respective constituencies should be subordinated to, and guided by the

local Congress Committees. That will inspire the lower Congress organisations, directly in contact with the masses, with the sense of authority and responsibility. That sense will be an activating factor. If the country is to be prepared for striking the decisive blow in the struggle for freedom in the most favourable moment, which may come before long, the task must be entrusted to the primary Congress organisations.

If the Congressmen in office are actuated rather with the spirit of resistance than of cooperation, if they understand that efficient administration of the Congress, then, the Congress Ministries can be very helpful for the Congress to take up attitude of unconcern with the war and apply itself to the task of preparing the country for the final struggle which is to be waged before long.

115. The Next Step: Gandhi

CWMG, Vol. 70, pp. 315–16

30 October 1939

I have never felt the weight of responsibility as heavily as I do today in connection with the present impasse with the British Government. The resignation of Congress Ministries was a necessity. But the next step is by no means clear. Congressmen seem to be expecting a big move. Some correspondents tell me, if I only give the call, there will be an India-wide response such as has never been made before. And they assure me that the people will remain non-violent. Beyond their assurance I have no other proof in support of their statement. I have proof in my own possession to the contrary. These columns have contained some of that proof. I cannot identify myself with any civil disobedience unless I am convinced that Congressmen believe in non-violence with all its implications and will follow implicitly the instructions issued from time to time.

Apart from the uncertainty of the observance of non-violence in Congress ranks is the tremendous fact that the Muslim League looks upon the Congress as the enemy of the Muslims. This makes it well-nigh impossible for the Congress to organise successful non-violent revolution through civil disobedience. It will certainly mean Hindu-Muslim riots. Non-violent technique, therefore, demands the reduction of civil disobedience to the lowest term consistent with national self-respect. The offensive will have to be taken by the British Government. In a situation so delicate and unexampled, no individual Congressman or even Congress Committee can be allowed to take the law into their own hands. The Working Committee should alone have the right to declare and regulate civil disobedience.

I have undertone to guide to Working Committee, but my limitations appeal me. My physical condition makes it impossible for me to move about as I used to before. I am therefore cut off from all outward contact with the masses. Even the present Congress Workers I do not know personally. I never meet them. My correspondence has to be restricted as much as possible. Therefore, unless Congressmen almost instinctively perceive the duty and the necessity of the preliminary inaction I am prescribing, my guidance will be not only useless but it will be harmful. It will create confusion.

I hold the opinion strongly that whilst by their own action the British Government have made it impossible for the Congress to cooperate with them in the prosecution of the war, the Congress must not embarrass them in its prosecution. I do not desire anarchy in the country. Independence will never come through it. I do not wish for the defeat of the British or, for that matter, of the Germans the people of Europe have been helplessly drawn into the war. But they will soon be awakened from their torpor.

This war will not be a war to the finish unless the whole of modern civilisation is to perish. Be there as it may, holding the views I do, I am in no hurry to precipitate civil disobedience. My prescription to Congressmen, for the time being, is to consolidate the organisation by purging it of all weaknesses. I swear by the old constructive programme of communal unity, removal of untouchability and the *Charkha*. It is quite clear that non-violence is impossible without the first two. If India's villages are to live and prosper, the *Charkha* must become universal. Rural civilisation is impossible without the *Charkha* and all it implies, i.e., revival of village crafts. Thus the *Charkha* is the symbol *par excellence* of non-violence and it can occupy the whole of the time of all Congressmen. If it makes no appeal to them, either they have no non-violence in them or I do not know the ABC of non-violence. If my love of the *Charkha* is a weakness in me, it is so radical as to make me unfit as a general. The wheel is bound up with my scheme of swaraj, indeed with life itself. All India should know my credentials on the eve of what can become the last and decisive battle for swaraj.

IV. NOVEMBER–DECEMBER 1939

116. Congress President to the Viceroy

CWMG, Vol. 70, pp. 433–34

3 November 1939

I thank you for your letter of November 2, embodying in concrete form the proposition which you had placed before us when we saw you on November 1. My colleagues and I have given our earnest consideration to it. We have had also the advantage of full talks with M.A. Jinnah. But we find ourselves unable to vary the answer we gave you during the interview.

At the outset I would like to say that both Gandhiji and I missed at the interview any reference to the main and moral issue raised by the Congress about clarification of war aims without which it was impossible for the Congress to consider any subsidiary proposal.

The present crisis has arisen owing to the outbreak of the war in Europe and the action of the British Government in declaring India a belligerent country without the consent of the Indian people. This crisis is entirely political and is not related to the communal issue in India. It raised vital questions in regard to the war aims of the British Government and the position of India in relation to them. The Congress Working Committee, as you are aware, issued a lengthy statement on September 14, 1939, in which they invited the British Government to declare their war aims, and in particular how these aims were going to apply to India and to be given effect to, in the present. It was further stated the Indian people must have the right of self-determination by framing their own constitution through a Constituent Assembly without external interference and should guide their own policy. On October 10, 1939, the All-India Congress Committee approved of and endorsed this statement, and stated that in the declaration to be made by the British Government, India must be declared an independent nation and present application should be given to this status to the largest possible extent. The Committee further added that Indian freedom must be based on democracy and unity and the full recognition and protection of the rights of all minorities.

Subsequent to this, the policy of the British Government was declared in the Viceregal statement, extracts from which you have been good enough to send me. This statement was considered by the Congress Working Committee soon after, and the Committee expressed their opinion that it was unfortunate and wholly unsatisfactory. As a consequence of this, they felt compelled to declare

that they were unable to give any support to Great Britain and to call upon the Provincial Governments, in Provinces where the Congress is in a majority, to tender their resignations.

It is worthy of note that the Viceregal declaration of British policy met with disapproval of the overwhelming body of opinion in India, even outside the Congress.

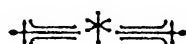
Subsequent statements made on behalf of the British Government in Parliament have not made any essential difference to the policy outlined in the Viceregal statement and, as you have already pointed out, that policy is still governed by the extracts from it that you have kindly sent us. I am afraid it is quite impossible for us to accept this policy or to consider any steps to further cooperation unless the policy of the British Government is made clear in a declaration on the lines suggested by the Congress.

It has pained us to find the communal question being dragged in this connection¹. It has clouded the main issue. It has been repeatedly said on behalf of the Congress that it is our earnest desire to settle all points of communal controversy by agreement and we propose to continue our efforts to this end. But I would point out that this question does not in any respect come in the way of a declaration of Indian freedom as suggested above. Such a declaration applies to the whole of India and not to any particular community, and the Constituent Assembly which will frame India's constitution will be formed on the widest possible basis of franchise and by agreement in regard to communal representation. We are all agreed that there must be full protection of minority rights and interests and this protection should be by agreement between the parties concerned. The British Government talking of sharing the burden has, in our opinion, made a settlement of the question much more difficult than it should have been. It should allay all real anxiety on the part of the British Government when the Congress declares that it completes no constitution which does not carry with it the protection of all minorities to their satisfaction.

It seems to us that a clear declaration of the kind suggested is an essential preliminary to any further consideration of the matter. I should like to add that recent developments in the European war have made it all the more necessary for a clear enunciation of war aims. If a satisfactory declaration is made, a discussion of the proposal made by your Excellency will be appropriate and useful and we shall gladly discuss it with you.

It is perhaps unnecessary to state that Gandhiji is in full agreement with this letter. We propose to leave tomorrow evening for Wardha unless Your Excellency desires otherwise.

¹ In a statement to the Press on 6 November, Gandhi also commented, in response to the *London Times* editorial, on the attempt to draw the minorities question 'whenever the question of India's freedom has come to the force'. He pointed out: 'To represent the Congress and its demand as totalitarian is to misrepresent facts. This misrepresentation is not less serious because it is unconscious. The Congress has deliberately discarded the use of force. It has no military backing or tradition. It has from its inception believed in communal unity. It seeks to represent non-Hindus as well as Hindus. It has had Parsis, Muslims and Christians leading it. It has gone out of its way to placate all communities. It could not do otherwise as its only sanction was constitutional agitation till it forged non-cooperation and civil disobedience as an addition to constitutional agitation and as an effective substitute for violence. Communal differences have been used by the British Government to thwart India's aspiration. That the process is likely to have been unconscious does not make it less mischievous. That the Congress has no desire for loaves and fishes must be crystal clear from wholesale resignation of Congress Ministries. The Congress will never the party to communal quarrels. It will rather stand aside and wander in the wilderness and wait for a better day. Even now the ugly spectacle of playing off the League against the Congress seems to be going on. I had expected that the stupendous European crisis would bring better perception to British Statesmen.'



117. The Congress and the League

Viceroy to Secretary of State (Tel.), 2 November 1939, Linlithgow Papers, Acc. No. 2335, NAI

Following is text of letter I have today sent to Gandhi, Rajendra Prasad and Jinnah:

You will remember that I agreed during our conversation yesterday to let you have in concrete form the proposition which I put to you and the other gentlemen who were present at the meeting, emphasizing that I did so with a genuine desire to help, a desire fully shared by His Majesty's Government.

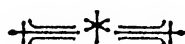
The proposition which I invited you and the other gentlemen present to consider, as leaders of the Congress and the Muslim League was that, given the great importance of ensuring harmonious working at the Centre, you should enter upon discussions between yourselves with a view to discovering whether you could reach a basis of agreement between yourself in the provincial field consequent on which you could let me have proposals which would result in representatives of your two organisations immediately participating in the Central Government as members of my Executive Council. I brought out too, that in my judgment it ought not to be necessary absolutely to resolve every detail of such differences as may exist in the Provinces. What was required, as was remarked in the course of the discussion, was a degree of agreement in respect of the provinces such as to make it possible for visitors, and the organisations which they represented, to put forward a scheme which could be considered for the Centre.

I added in regard to any arrangement at the Centre first that one would hope that it might be found practicable to include also one or possibly more representatives of other important groups and that was a question on which I should value your advice when we come to grapple with the details.

Secondly that the arrangement which I invited you to consider from the Centre would be an *ad-hoc* arrangement for the period of the war and quite distinct from the much wider question of constitutional reform at the end of the war; and I mentioned that on that last point my declaration had set out the position of His Majesty's government. I attach a copy of the extracts from that declaration which I brought to the notice of the meeting yesterday.

Thirdly that the position of anyone appointed to my executive Council as a member of a political party would be identical in privileges and in obligations with that of the existing members of my Council; and fourthly, that the arrangement would be within the general scheme of the existing law. It would be admittedly and inevitably a make shift arrangement for the duration of the campaign. I brought out that what was required now, if we could get a workable scheme together, was to put it into operation with as little delay as possible pending the more general reviews of whole constitutional position which His majesty's Government have expressed their readiness to undertake after the conclusion of hostilities.

I think the above makes the position clear. Let me in conclusion repeat that as I said yesterday, I am at any time at your disposal or that of the other gentlemen who attended our meeting, whether jointly or singly, to give any assistance in my power in reaching conclusions on these most important matters. I feel certain, as I said yesterday that the suggestions I have put to you, reflecting as they do very real and substantial evidence to the anxiety of His Majesty's Government to reach a complete understanding, will receive full and sympathetic consideration from you.



118. India and War

Fortnightly Report for the Fortnight ending 31 October, Home Department, File No. 18/10/39, NAI

*Government of Madras
Public (General) Department
Fort St. George
3 November 1939*

War—Anti-war speeches on the usual lines continue to be made in most districts. Malabar has had the greatest number of meetings with speakers mostly drawn from the district. Guntur also reports considerable activity. Some of the most objectionable speeches, urging that moneys should be withdrawn from Banks and currency notes refused, come from the Tamil Districts. This is mainly due to the activity of a number of Communists and Socialists who normally work in Madras city and who have been touring the Southern districts. These speeches appear now to be having slightly more effect and the question of prosecuting one of the speakers is under consideration.

One leading Communist agitator of Madras city, B. Srinivasa Rao, is being prosecuted under the Defence of India Rules on account of his anti-war speeches. The Government have also ordered proceedings under section 108 Criminal procedure Code to be taken against several other Socialists in Madras and East Godavari on account of similar speeches.

119. The Standpoint of the Congress

Nehru's speech at New Delhi, 4 November 1939. *SWJN*, Vol. 10, pp. 220–25

Some people used to make cynical comments on my references to the international situation in the course of my speeches and accuse me of thinking more of what was happening abroad than in our own country. But recent events must have convinced these critics that India's problem is indissolubly linked up with international problems. We cannot possibly divorce ourselves from the happenings in the international sphere which undoubtedly leave a deep mark in our country.

The entire map of the world will change in one or two years. We have perhaps never had such a revolutionary period before. The major war has not yet begun. What has happened during the last two months is a misnomer for a war. No doubt, dozens of ships have been sunk and many people killed.

The meagre news about the war received in India leaves us in doubt as to whether a war is actually going on. Without going into the propriety of the action taken by the different powers, the fact remains that Russia has achieved a victory in the present war without fighting. Another outstanding fact that has emerged from the last two months' events is that Herr Hitler's ambitions in eastern Europe, including the Balkan states, Bulgaria and Turkey have received a setback. An impregnable iron wall has been created in his way. In short, Herr Hitler has been defeated in Eastern Europe without even a fight. Nobody can refute that patent fact.

Russia is still a dark horse. Nobody can say on which side she will align herself. Russia has had designs against Germany and England. She has explained her own sphere of influence. The entire map of Europe has changed and Russia is now dominating over the whole of Europe. The key to the situation in Europe has paradoxically passed into the hands of Russia and USA, both neutral countries.

I cannot definitely say whether the war will continue for a very long time. There is tremendous fuss about an early peace. So far as I can foresee it will be a long range war that will continue for

two or three years, and if that comes true, then the changes it will produce will also be equally far reaching.

There is a colossal increase in the burden of taxation in the countries engaged in the war. Even in England, which is a wealthy country, the burden is bound to till. The expenditure on war per day is staggering. England is counting on loans from America. It is true that America will be prepared to help Britain with war material, as there is great resentment against Hitlerism in the USA. Yet I do not agree that the new Legislation passed by the US Congress will materially improve Britain's position.¹ The middle classes in Britain are feeling the burden.

The position in Germany is well-nigh precarious, as it has not the same resources which England possesses. Moreover, Germany's economic position will be considerably weakened by the blockade. There is shortage of currency as all the wealth of the country has been exhausted in producing war weapons.² That, however, does not mean that Germany will not fight or has not the endurance for a year's war. I want to drive home the fact that the economic warfare will produce more tangible results than the military warfare. The whole economic and social structure of the world will undergo revolutionary changes that will make it beyond recognition. The present imperialist domination also cannot stand the strain of the war. British imperialism cannot remain unaffected by the war. They have to consider the situation in India in connection with these revolutionary changes ahead.

Various resolutions have been passed by the Congress during the last twelve years in order to define our attitude in the event of war. These resolutions made it abundantly clear that the Congress would not be a party to an imperialist war. We have also made our position clear in regard to Hitlerism. Our sympathies are not with Hitler. We deem Hitlerism as worse than British and French imperialism. In fact, Hitler created conditions in Germany similar to those prevailing in British and French possessions and it can well be said that the conditions in India will be worse under Hitler's regime. In short, Hitlerism is a thoroughly rotten and tyrannical creed. We in India have expressed our determination to oppose it. Our complaint is that Hitlerism received strength from British imperialism. The Munich betrayal is a historical fact. The betrayal of Czechoslovakia, Spain and Abyssinia is also there. It is deplorable that India was declared a belligerent country without consulting her people. That has created a great deal of resentment which makes it easy for us to take a quick decision, yet we do not want to do anything to help Hitler. At the same time we cannot help British imperialism.

Under these circumstances, we decided to give an opportunity to the other party to clarify its war aims. We put certain questions to them regarding the vague generalizations in which they have indulged. We asked them whether they were really fighting for democracy and freedom and whether they were prepared to liquidate their imperialism. We wanted a declaration from Britain that India is a free country. We also insisted on giving effect to that declaration in so far as it was practicable within the framework of the present constitution. The Viceroy and the Secretary of State for India have made speeches but they have evaded our questions. They have made no mention of democracy, freedom and the right of self-determination. They repeated the declaration that was made twenty years ago. It is an absurd reply. The questions raised by us were fundamental. I am prepared to concede that there are people in England and France who really want to do justice to India, but they do not have much influence with their governments.

The reply to the Congress questions has proved that the present war is also an imperialist war like the last war of 1914. The Working Committee has decided to call upon the Congress ministries to resign as we cannot help in the prosecution of war and today provincial autonomy has ended in the Congress provinces.

The resignation of the ministries is a great step towards non-cooperation in the prosecution of war and its importance should not be under-rated. We cannot lightly cry halt to the experiment of the last two and a half years. It will have far-reaching effects and the country must be prepared for all eventualities.

The fissiparous tendencies in the Congress are to be deprecated. A united, disciplined and fully organised Congress alone can fight the government. The small groups in the Congress cannot fight the government. We must unite at this critical juncture in India's history through which we are passing. Some of our short-sighted people may do more to weaken the Congress than our opponents. I am against party action. On the other hand, I am waiting for further to see how the situation develops as in that case we will be in a position to take advantage of the new changes.

There are tremendous things ahead. It is quite possible that we might have to embark on a large-scale campaign of civil disobedience. We should be prepared, therefore, for all eventualities.

There was nothing to hide from you in the talks that the Congress leaders had with the Viceroy and Jinnah, yet there are obvious difficulties in giving out a detailed account of it. I would, however, like to make it clear that the question discussed with the Viceroy and with Jinnah was fundamentally a political question. The Congress demand that India should be declared an independent country has nothing to do with the communal question. The Congress does not demand for itself exclusively the right to frame India's constitution. The constituent assembly we want will be elected on the basis of adult suffrage. If the Congress retains the confidence of the people then the people will elect them. The demand is made on behalf of all communities and people of India. There is no question of the distribution of spoils. The question can rightly be raised as to how the proposed constituent assembly is to be convened and how the fear of the suppression of minorities by a majority is to be removed, but no Indian, who does not fear independence, can help supporting the demand for convening such an assembly. The question as to how minorities are to be represented in such a body can be raised. The Muslim League has complete independence for its objective and unless it is abandoned, it cannot but associate itself with such a demand. The League has every right to claim that Muslims' rights must be effectively safeguarded.

I agree with Maulana Nuruddin¹ that Lord Zetland's statement is an undignified one. The very basis of our movement will go, if we accept that statement.

There was a time when the Congress was composed of a handful of delegates, but even then it used to speak on behalf of the country. The Congress is now a powerful organisation which has lakhs of people on its rolls and millions among its sympathizers. It would be absurd to suggest that the Congress represents every Indian. It has no communal claims to make. It has always functioned on a broad basis of nationalism. It is quite possible that at times the number of Hindus, Muslims or Sikhs is small, but it represents them. So far as the communal demands are concerned, the Hindu Mahasabha is there which represents, to a large extent, the Hindus. It cannot and does not speak on behalf of the whole country. The portals of the Congress are open to all. The statement of Lord Zetland militates against those fundamentals.

There is no communal issue in the present demand for a declaration from the British Government. The government's reply betrays the same old imperialist voice. They have made an ingenious attempt to give it a communal colour. I do not, however, deny the existence of the communal problem which is quite difficult. We have to solve it and will solve it.

The real intentions of the British Government will be known when one notices the British being bracketed with minorities, vested interests and the princes whose interests are to be safeguarded. It only means giving the key of progress to the British Government. Freedom will be a meaningless thing without economic independence. Most of the princes are the creation of British imperialism and depend upon the government for their existence. It is possible that in a

few states the people might tolerate their rulers with certain adjustments, but that is primarily their problem.

Lord Salisbury has stated that the interests of the primitive tribes should be safeguarded⁴. We can very well understand the sympathies of His Lordship with these tribes. So far as the minority problems are concerned, I make it plain that all legitimate rights of the minorities will be fully safeguarded with statutory safeguards by a constituent assembly with the consent of the minorities concerned.

I have played a considerable part in bringing the demand for a constituent assembly to the forefront during the last five years. I recall that when a resolution on the subject was put through in the provincial assemblies, the representatives of the Muslim League had sponsored amendments seeking to clarify that the rights of minorities would be safeguarded. In some provinces these amendments were accepted and in others the Congress premiers give the necessary assurance. The communal question does not arise at all. The Congress President's reply to the Viceroy which will be published in a few days' time will make it abundantly clear.

During my talks with Jinnah, no such difficulty as pointed above was felt. I told Jinnah that we were prepared to discuss all outstanding communal questions and decide them once for all. There are small things which create a lot of bitterness and heart-burning. The first thing that deserved our attention is the constitutional question. Consequently, we postponed our talks for a solution of the communal differences and they will be resumed in a few days. We had talks on the constitutional issue. We were agreed on many things. There were differences also, but they had nothing to do with the communal question. There was a slight difference of approach. At first, we had a hope of sending a joint reply on behalf of the Congress and the League. The publication of these replies would show where we stand in our relations. We should not say anything that might increase the bitterness. We have a right to disagree with each other and criticize each other but we should not attribute motives. Today Mahatmajī has further elucidated the Congress position in his interview with the Viceroy. I cannot say what would be the outcome, but we should be prepared for the worst lest it should be said that we were caught napping.

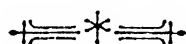
The Congress Working Committee's statement has received tremendous publicity in America and Europe and it has put new life in the hearts of the oppressed and enslaved peoples of the world who consider it a charter of liberty. I hope that the present war will spell the end of imperialism. It is not the case of a wish fathering the thought. The conviction is hardening on me that the present is an imperialist war, and great forces are rising which I think will work for India's freedom.

The United States Neutrality Act of 4 November 1939, while allowing the Allies access to United States goods on cash-and-carry basis, forbade US ships from proceeding to France, Britain, Ireland, Germany, the Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden and Norway, South of Bergen.

⁴ The British Government had also suffered from the same delusion. The experts at the ministry of economic warfare made confident assurances that Germany's military machinery would come to a standstill from lack of oil and other raw materials. Chamberlain claimed that the blockade was the main weapon. In fact, the German standard of living in 1939 was higher than ever before. The decrease in the production of civilian goods was less than that of the British until the last stages of the war.

¹ Maulana Nuruddin Behari, President of the Delhi District Congress Committee, who presided over the meeting, had been highly critical of Lord Zetland's speech in the House of Lords that 'Hindus as represented by the Congress and Muslims as represented by the Muslim League, have been invited by the Viceroy to interview him'.

⁴ On 2 November 1939, Lord Salisbury had said in the House of Lords: 'What did the noble Viscount mean by Dominion Status, what would become of the safeguards? What would we do about the princes, the primitive tribes, the scheduled castes and the minorities?'



120. Gandhi's meeting with Viceroy

Viceroy to Secretary of State (Tel.), 4 November 1939, Linlithgow Papers, Acc. No. 2335, NAI. See also *CWMG*, Vol. 70, pp. 419–20

I had two hours very friendly conversation with Gandhi. His chief object was I think to try to secure some further liberalization of my declaration, but in that he was unsuccessful. Two main points which he raised were:

... He explained that he and his friends had regarded Hoare's statement on Dominion status referring to the 1926 variety of Dominion Status which was prior to the appearance of the statute of Westminster. I replied that as I understood it Dominion Status was the Status which Dominions had at any time, which, if correct, meant that the terms Dominion Status in 1939 covered the whole ground covered by the Statute of Westminster. I promised however to clear the point in such way as might seem best.

I can see very little real justification for any Congress doubts but as they apparently attach importance to the point suggest that it might be possible to make it clear beyond any question by an arranged question and as answer on Monday.

Your reference to Congress representing Hindu and Muslim League as representing Muslims. Gandhi said that he felt very deeply on this question which he must take up and clear unless that was done spontaneously. The spot was a very tender one, and he was already receiving telegram urging that in face of such 'insult' negotiations could not proceed. I told him that I thought he was taking much too seriously a casual reference of a quite general character in an *ex-tempore* speech and that I know you much too well and you knew India much too well to make it likely that you would say anything that could possibly be construed as unfair. I would, however, inform you of his feeling and I would beg him to take no action of any sort until I had been able to hear further.

Here again we have of course of point on which Congress with their extreme anxiety to be regarded as non-sectarian and as all-embracing are morbidly touchy. We do not at the same time want if we can avoid it to involve ourselves in the controversy as to how much they do or do not represent. If, however, you have any opportunity of clearing the air publicly in the immediate future it would I think be worth doing, and I suggest, that some sort of a message from you to Gandhi through me of a reassuring character might also be appropriate. I should have thought that it would probably suffice to say that he had placed far too narrow a construction on your remarks, and that it had never been your intention to suggest that you regarded Congress as representing exclusive Hindus and that you were well aware that it was in no sense exclusively or entirely Hindu in character or composition.

I will telegraph separately at greater leisure as regards general outcome of our conversation. There was no suggestion of any withdrawal on Gandhi's part of Congress demand for a declaration, but we discussed with utmost friendliness situation under Section 93 and course of future constitutional development. He pressed that during Section 93 Governors should steer a moderate course as regards Congress activities and freedom of speech for Congress. I told him that this must be a matter for the discretion of Governors, but that I had every confidence in their tact and judgment. But if there was serious transgressions there could be no question of suspending or withholding action. He said he quite understood. He commended our decision to avoid minority ministries and fact that we appeared to be using European Advisers almost, if not quite, exclusively, and said he felt certain that this was likely best to pave the way for our emergence from Section 93. The use of Section 93 had not been in the least misunderstood. It was indeed a statutory provision and was not a sanction and he felt confident that Governors would bear in mind.

I threw a fly over him on Federation and discussed various hypotheses in that connection which I will report separately. While repeating that he could commit no one he responded exceptionally well to possibility of reservation later to Federal idea, but doubted if the time was yet ripe, though he left the impression of being much attracted by the idea....

121. The Jamiyat al-Ulama Stand

Hindu, 4 November 1939

4 November 1939

'The unsatisfactory declaration of the Viceroy and the inopportune comment of the Secretary of State¹ on it has wounded the hearts of the freedom-loving persons all over India. The manner in which the Congress has responded to it is in accord with its 50 years' tradition. That was the only right reply to the unsatisfactory declaration of the Viceroy.

As regards the Muslim League's attitude, Maulana Ahmad Saeed², Secretary of the Jamiyat, said:

'As far as the Muslim masses and that poor section which is suffering from economic difficulties are concerned, I want to say that they are not in favour of cooperating with the Government. The Muslim community is not prepared to allow itself to be sold at the price at which Jinnah wants to sell it. I want to clear the point very frankly that if Jinnah assures the Viceroy of cooperation and help in the war on behalf of the Muslims he would not only deceive himself, but he would be misleading the Viceroy also'.

¹ Zetland's statement in House of Lords on 18 October.

² Maulana Ahmad Saeed (1888-1959), educated in Delhi and was the founder secretary of the Jamiyat al Ulema i Hind; actively involved in the Rowlatt satyagraha and the Khilafat and non cooperation movements; was against the Communal Award, separate electorates and the Muslim League's demand for Pakistan; stood for Hindu-Muslim unity, delivered the Presidential address at the Bihar Muslim Independent Party Conference in 1936

122. Bihar PCC and the War

Searchlight, 8 November 1939

7 November 1939

The Bihar Provincial Congress Working Committee at a meeting held today at the Sedaqat Ashram, under the Presidentship of Rajendra Prasad, adopted the following resolution:

This Committee reiterates all the resolutions passed by the Congress Working Committee and the AICC during the last 2 months and directs all subordinate committees that those resolutions should be propagated to the masses and war policy of the Congress should be explained to them.

The Committee also directs that the Congress should be made stronger and the masses should be prepared on the basis of the non-violent programme.

The Committee regrets to note the unhappy relations between the Hindus and Muslims and asks Congressmen generally to make up these differences and to compose any communal quarrel without taking sides with anybody.

The Committee hopes that the tension will be cleared and a healthy atmosphere will be created in which all Hindus and Muslims will march forward to win Indian independence. The Committee asks the subordinate Committees and Congressmen to prepare themselves for all eventualities'.

123. In Support of Congress War Resolution

Agricultural Labourers' Support, *Hindu*, 9 November 1939

9 November 1939

By a resolution passed at a meeting of Andhra Provincial Agricultural Labourers' Association held here yesterday, V. Raghaviah presiding, the Association condemned the statements of Dewan Bahadur R. Srinivasan, Rao Bahadur M.C. Rajah, and Ari Gowder, as they did not represent the attitude of the Depressed Classes and endorsed the Congress Working Committee's resolution on the war crisis.

By another resolution, the Committee strongly believed in the capacity and sincerity of the Congress organisation to redress the grievances of the downtrodden and expressed its great faith in that great body and condemned the action of self-seekers who tried to divert the attention of the oppressed classes from that great organisation.

By another resolution passed at the meeting, the Committee pledged the hearty support of the Depressed Classes in this district to the Indian National Congress to successfully implement its resolution in regard to war. The Committee further called upon the agricultural labourers, including Harijans and criminal tribes and other suppressed communities in this district, to come forward with their active support to successfully carry out the resolution of the Working Committee in regard to war.

124. War Resolutions in Provincial Legislatures¹

Indian Annual Register, N.N. Mitra (ed.), Vol. 2, 1939, pp. 118–120, 145–147, 154–156 and 186–187

Punjab Legislative Assembly, 3 to 6 November: The Unionist Party's resolution on the war offering unconditional support to Britain and the amendments moved by the various parties were discussed to-day. The main resolution, which was moved by *Sardar Bahadur Gurbachan Singh* (Unionist), offered unconditional support to Britain and urged that it should be made clear that the constitution of India should be examined afresh at the end of the war with a view to the immediate attainment of the objective to Dominion status, with effective protection of the due rights of the minorities and other sections and in consultation with and agreement of all the parties concerned. To this resolution Dr *Gopichand Bhargava*, Leader of the Opposition (Congress), moved an amendment 'viewing with grave concern the curtailment of powers and activities of provincial governments' making India a participant in the war without her consent, characterizing the Viceroy's statement as wholly unsatisfactory and disappointing and offering co-operation to Britain if the principles of democracy and self-determination were applied immediately to the Government of India, with due safeguards for the minority interests. Speakers of the Ministerial party supported the Unionist party's resolution, mainly on the ground that it was a question of protecting their own hearths and homes. They demanded that full Dominion status should be granted to India after the war. All the Opposition speakers (except two, who favoured the Unionist Party resolution) spoke in favour of the amendment. *Sir William Roberts*, the only European member and President of the European Association, said that his Association had full sympathy with Indian aspirations and would be too glad if they could get an acceptable form of Dominion status to-day. The debate was continued on Monday, the 6th November, when *Mian Ifikaruddin*, Secretary of the Congress Party, said that his party had taken up the correct attitude in wanting to know before India entered the war as to what they were fighting for. *Malik Barkat Ali* (Muslim League) did not support the resolution, as it

demanded Dominion Status. As a Muslim Leaguer he demanded complete independence; nor would he support the Congress amendment. He wanted a settlement of all minorities' questions before the establishment of independence. *Diwan Chamanlal* was of opinion that the debate was being held on a completely unreal basis. The resolution, he said, condemned aggression and Nazism but the Punjab Government themselves believed in these two doctrines. This was evident from the number of arrests that had taken place during the last two months and the confinement in prison of a member of the House without trial. If the resolution were adopted, said the speaker, there could be no political advance, for it demanded that Dominion Status should be established 'only in consultation with all parties concerned.' During the last war, he added, there was talk of self-determination, which had been forgotten soon after the hostilities ended. At the beginning of this war there had been talk of liberty and freedom—promises were already being forgotten. *Nawab Muzaffar Khan* (Unionist), in a brief speech, whole-heartedly supported the resolution. He advised the members not to be misled by catch-words and catch-phrases and declared, amid applause, that the Punjab was with the Premier in the matter of co-operating with the British Government. *Dr Gokulchand Narang*, a former Minister of the Punjab, expressed the view that the mental attitude of the Punjabi was to fight whenever he got an opportunity. Even if the Premier had made a declaration opposing India's participation in the war the Punjabi would have fought. Hundreds and thousands of recruits would have come forward. (There were Ministerial interruptions challenging this statement). He suspected that the real motive of the resolution was to pass a reactionary motion opposing the grant of Dominion Status without the consent of 'all sections of the population.' It was necessary, he said, for the sake of defending India's hearths and homes, to help the British Government and fight in this war, but at the same time all shades of Indians must fully and entirely endorse the demands made by the Congress from the British Government. *Sir Sikandar Hyat Khan* was cheered when he rose to reply to the debate. He referred at the outset to the failure of the Delhi talks but expressed the hope that the efforts made by Mr Gandhi and Mr Jinnah would not go in vain. The resolution before the House, he said, was of the greatest importance, for on it the destiny of the whole of India depended. It deserved dispassionate and calm consideration. Every honest man had expressed his sympathy with the Allies and every eminent Indian had said that India did not want bargaining. That being so, why did some people say that they would not co-operate unless Britain declared her aims toward this country? This was bargaining of a most despicable kind. In the course of his speech the Premier asked the Opposition members to show an example in history when words had won independence. 'It is deeds which have won independence,' he declared. Continuing, he said he would spurn a friend who would like to take advantage of him in his difficulty. 'Give Britain whole-hearted, unconditional and unequivocal support, and at the end of the war the power that you use in favour of Britain can be used against her if you do not obtain your objective.' Proceeding, Sir Sikandar referred to the declaration made by Sir Samuel Hoare in his recent speech in Parliament. He said that the declaration was clear enough. It meant that after the war India would get the same Dominion Status which was now being enjoyed by the other Dominions. He advised the Opposition members to believe in what Sir Samuel had solemnly declared. People, said the Premier, had been disappointed with the Viceroy's declaration. He expressed the view that the Indians themselves were responsible for the disappointing nature of that statement, for the major political party had asked the Viceroy to make a declaration without a word about the other parties. He eulogized the Viceroy, characterizing him as a great friend of India who had the confidence of not only the major party out of every section of India. He was sure that the Viceroy would eventually succeed in bringing about harmony and unity. Referring to communal unity, the Premier said that every attempt was being made to solve this problem. He did not believe that the British Government

were standing in the way of their progress. If only the majority community were generous towards the minority the question would be solved without difficulty. The Congress was undoubtedly a big political organization but it did not command the confidence of the whole country.

All amendments were rejected and the Unionist party's resolution was pressed to a division and carried by 104 votes to 39.

The UP Legislative Assembly, 27 October: One of the most momentous sessions of the Assembly, specially summoned to discuss the war resolution met to-day. All the Ministers excepting the Premier, who came in after question time, and almost all the members were present in their seats while the galleries, including the ladies' galleries, were packed to capacity and the approaches to the Chamber were thronged by visitors.

The *Premier* rose at 12-10 to move his resolution. As he was still in indifferent health, the Speaker suggested that he might speak sitting. The Premier thanked the House for the welcome they had accorded him and the courteous consideration and generosity that had always been shown to him by every individual member of the House. He then moved the war resolution.

Raja Bisheshwar Dayal, raising a point of order, contended that under rules 33 and 36 and Standing Order No. 17 the resolution was out of order in as much as they could make no reference to the action or conduct of His Majesty, the King Emperor, His Excellency the Viceroy or the Governor. The Speaker ruled out the point of order.

Commending the resolution to the House, Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant said it was of surpassing importance and earnestly hoped that the vital problems with which it dealt would be discussed in an atmosphere free from anger, passion or bitterness and with a just and correct appreciation of the momentous and far-reaching nature of the issues involved. The resolution consisted of three paragraphs, of which the first and the third voiced the feelings of regret which certain acts of the British Government and the statement issued by the Viceroy on October 17 had produced in the minds of the people of this country. The second paragraph contained concrete proposals and it was to this he should like to invite the attention of the House. Indians were told that the war was being fought for putting an end to aggression, for making the world safe for democracy, for saving the people of the world from the bondage of fear and for ensuring settled peace. The Prime Minister of England had stated in a speech just a fortnight ago that surrender to wrong-doing would spell the extinction of all hope and the annihilation of all those values of life which had, through the centuries, been at once the mark and inspiration of human progress. The passage from Mr Chamberlain's speech had also been quoted by the Viceroy in his recent declaration of the war aims of the allies. The attitude of India as regards the main points at issue was perfectly clear, said Pandit Pant. Nationalist opinion in this country had been and was sternly opposed to Nazism and as the statement of the Congress Working Committee had repeatedly declared, it was an entire disapproval of the ideology and practice of Fascism and Nazism and their glorification of war and violence and the suppression of the human spirit.

The Congress had similarly condemned the aggression in which the Nazis and Fascists repeatedly indulged and their sweeping away of well established principles and recognised standards of civil behaviour. The Working Committee had also unhesitatingly condemned the latest aggression of the German Government against Poland and expressed its genuine sympathy with those who were its victims. The people of India, as had been abundantly made clear by the Congress, were interested in the suppression and elimination of all those systems and methods which resulted directly in human degradation and the imposition of alien will and domination of any people, since all these tended not only to the demoralisation and weakening of the victims of such methods but ultimately recoiled also on the aggressor. 'Let us then fully appreciate', added Pandit Pant, 'the character and implications of the malady which has gripped the world and from which it has to be

saved. Let us also take note of the objective which all those interested in establishing genuine peace and preserving human dignity and freedom desire. India shares the views and the aspirations of those who are so interested and it is the duty of us all to determine how this objective can and should be achieved.' Pandit Pant dealt with the equilibrium that was to be in the international sphere and said that if the principles of democracy and freedom were to prevail then independence of India must be accepted as a condition precedent to the fulfillment of this noble purpose. 'When, therefore, we ask for a declaration and recognition of the principle of Indian independence, we are neither bargaining nor meaning any selfish advantage. We are as much interested as any other country in the peace and happiness of humanity and it is as much our right as our duty to see it that the sacrifices which unsophisticated people are asked to make bear rich fruit and the noble and inspiring slogans which experienced politicians employ to secure the co-operation of the general public are fully respected. It was for that we insisted on a declaration of Indian independence, the recognition of the principle of self-determination for India. It was in the interest of Britain and France that India should attain independence. It is in the interest of England that she should realise this, as the sands of time are running short. She had already generated enough bitterness against herself in this land and it will not be to her advantage if, after becoming free, India carries with her bitter memories of her association with England. It is unthinkable that this land of ours, with its civilisation, with its traditions and with such a large population, should be expected to continue as a vassal of an insular state thousands of miles away from her. There is yet room for friendship. There may be even room for partnership, provided we allow reason to prevail against any prejudice and racial arrogance and provided we practice the principles we profess; as Hitler has been told, 'not words, but deeds are needed'. We do not want any new constitution to be evolved while the war is on, not that this is impossible.'

Pandit Pant characterised the accusation that the Congress was bargaining as a travesty of facts. Why should they be blamed if they said that if their co-operation was called for, it would be available, provided that it was made worth their while in the national as well as in the international interest to offer it? 'We are ready', he declared, 'to make sacrifices in common with England, if she so chooses, for making the world safe for democracy, but if she spurns this offer and rejects the proffered hand of fellowship, we will make those sacrifices in such other effective ways as will ensure fulfillment of the purpose we have in view.' Referring to Mr Chamberlain's statement that the new order would be based on mutual confidence and mutual trust, the Premier said, 'This is the trust that has been reposed in us. Even the Government of India Act of 1935 has been amended in the teeth of the opposition of the country, of the Congress and the Muslim League and of most of the Governments—not only in matters legislative but even in matters executive. The Viceroy had made a statement which could have been left unmade and which was received with a chorus of disappointment, not unmingled with indignation, all over the country. The preamble to the Act of 1919 was condemned and looked upon with extreme disfavour and resentment by Nationalist India when it was introduced. The policy declared by Lord Irwin in 1929 led to the movement for national emancipation in 1930. 'The Act of 1935 was rejected by all of us', continued Pandit Pant, 'and we had resolutions first in the Central Assembly and later in all the Provincial Assemblies for its replacement by a constitution framed through the self-determination of the people of India. Yet the Viceroy, instead of going forward, asks us to go back to the year 1919 and to be satisfied with what we were then told and to treat this as a great boon which should impel Indians to throw their lives into this Armageddon. To add insult to injury, we are told that the responsibility is ours that there are differences among us and that these must be borne in mind. It is sad to think that our differences should be exploited.'

Pandit Pant refuted the charge that the Congress had no right to speak for India, and observed that the Congress did not claim any privilege for itself. The Congress wanted a democratic system. It wanted the popular voice to prevail. Any reference to internal differences was really irrelevant. Independence had to be determined vis a vis Great Britain. The vital issue was whether England was prepared to accept the right of India for self-determination. 'We are determined to achieve the aims which we have set before us and we are prepared to adopt every honourable course to put an end to the process of suppression which is in alliance with the forces of reaction and is responsible for the moral anarchy that is prevailing in the world, so that humanity may go on advancing through liberty, equality and fraternity', concluded the Premier.

Madras Legislative Assembly, Special Session, 26 October 1939: After question time, which occupied a few minutes, the *Hon'ble Mr C. Rajagopalachari*, the Premier, stood up amidst cheers from the Congress benches to move his resolution on the war crisis, similar to the one moved by the Bombay Premier yesterday word for word.

... 'The resolution expresses the regret of this House that the British Government have made India a participant in this war between Great Britain and Germany without the consent of India.'

After moving the resolution... the *Premier* stated that various Dominion Parliaments had since the declaration of war considered the very question whether it was right and proper that their people also should be at war with Germany. The Indian people were in a condition in which according to their political status they could be declared to be at war with any body. 'Let us not in our sheltered existence imagine that war is a kind of newspaper news. "I claim that whatever may be the Constitution and whatever be the law, we the people of India are entitled to consider and examine the question whether there has been a justifiable reason for us to be at war with another people and also whether it is right to follow it up in action. It was right and proper and not only natural that the people of India, the thinking people of India (laughter) should consider seriously whether it was right after all, and not for the adult people of a country or a shire in England or Scotland but for the whole population of India to be ordered out immediately unless the matter was explained to them and they knew why they should be at war... The Indian people were a large population with a great culture and with a civilisation and a history behind them and if they should be successfully declared to be at war it would have been better if they had been consulted before in the matter. As a mere matter of commonsense and wisdom, apart from humanity and the doctrine of right and wrong, it would have been well if Britain had taken India into confidence. Therefore, the people of India protested against the procedure adopted by the British. The Ministry, said the Premier, had decided to accept the position reached by the Congress Working Committee and to resign. The first reason for the decision was that the people of India keenly felt that it was not right that another Government far away from them should simply decide for the Indian people that they were at war with another country. Not only had the decision that the people of India were at war with Germany been taken without consulting the people either soon after the declaration of war or in connection with the business to be undertaken in the matter, but the British Government had passed laws without consulting the provincial Government, whereby even the modicum of autonomy allowed to the provinces had been taken away. 'If the provincial Government do not conduct the war each by itself, still there is to-day no other Government in India which can be said to represent democracy or to be working under any form of democracy. Therefore, in the absence of a proper democratic Government at the centre, the various provincial Governments were a handy machinery. Instead of strengthening them, the British Government, through the Secretary of State for India, has taken away the entire power of these Governments in respect of the legislature and the executive in various matters.'

Bengal Legislative Assembly, 13 to 18 December: With a full attendance of members and the galleries crowded, the Assembly took up for discussion this evening the Government resolution on the war. The following is the text:

'This Assembly dissociates itself from the aggressive and ruthless methods pursued by totalitarian Governments in Europe and declares its complete sympathy with the British Government for taking up arms against Nazi Germany in the defence of democracy and of the right of self-determination of the smaller and weaker nations which are now at the mercy of a few powerful and aggressive dictator ridden states and cannot, unaided, maintain their territorial integrity.

'This Assembly, therefore, authorises the Government to assure the Government of India full co-operation in the successful prosecution of the war.

'This Assembly further authorises the Government to convey to His Majesty's Government that in consonance with the aims of the present war, as declared by that Government, and understood by India and consistent with the accepted ideal of the British Empire as a Commonwealth of free nations, the attainment by India of the status of a Dominion as defined in the Statute of Westminster which is the declared policy of the British Government, should be implemented immediately on the termination of the war and the New Constitution formulated should provide sufficient and effective safeguards for the recognised minorities and interests and should be based upon their full consent and approval.'

In moving the resolution, *Mr A.K. Fazlul Huq*, Prime Minister, appealed to the House to discuss the question without passion or prejudice so that the result of that discussion might lead them to a decision which would be honourable to themselves and conducive to the good of the Province. The resolution, Mr Huq continued, naturally divided itself into three parts. The first part presented no difficulty because they were more or less agreed that the methods adopted by Hitler and his associates desired the domination of the whole civilized world. So far as the position of Great Britain was concerned, they all knew how the British Prime Minister had tried his utmost to avoid a conflict. 'I hope, I can say without fear that the ideals for which Great Britain is fighting are ideals which it would not be difficult for anybody to accept,' said the Prime Minister. Great Britain was not fighting for aggression, nor for the maintenance of her own interests, but was fighting in defence of those fundamental principles, the maintenance of which was vital to the civilized world. Dealing with the second part of his resolution, Mr Fazlul Huq explained why he was moving the resolution at the moment although the Muslim League, of which he was a member, had not yet finally declared that the Muslims of India should offer co-operation to Britain. In the first place, besides being a member of the League, he happened to be connected with a provincial administration and it was time that the Government of Bengal declared their policy. And as a member of a Provincial Government which was a unit of the British Government, he could not possibly see that there was any other course but to declare most emphatically that they should co-operate with the British Government, and to request his colleagues in the House to take up that attitude towards the war. If, however, at any time, it so happened that the President of the League declared that the Muslims of India ought not to co-operate with Great Britain, and thus there was a conflict with regard to his position as a member of the Cabinet and as a member of the League, he would allow the claim of the League to prevail (cheers from the Coalition Ministerialist Party benches). Speaking on the amendment that had been tabled on behalf of the Opposition, the Prime Minister said that there was no question of India having been made a participant in the war between Germany and England. All that had been done was that immediately after the promulgation of the war or perhaps a few days before the war had been declared, troops from India had been dispatched to certain strategic positions. In doing so, the Government of India had taken measures for the protection of India herself. And as regards the question of consultation

with the people of India, he was sure that they would realise that military measures could not be undertaken by means of a plebiscite. The decision must be swift and no one could for a moment contend that the decision with regard to military measures should be taken after consultation. On the question of promulgation of Ordinances the Prime Minister pointed out that it was absolutely necessary that the Government of India should have taken powers to give direction to all Provincial Governments in order to meet the requirements of the situation. Mr Huq then referred to the obstacles in the way of India attaining the fullest measure of political liberty and freedom. There was no escape from the fact that the various communities in India were divided in a manner which was almost unparalleled in any other country in the world. He did not believe there was any force in the contention that the Hindu-Muslim differences were the creation of the Europeans. It was not the Europeans who divided them; it was the Indians themselves who created the division, and that was why the Europeans ruled them. The differences between the Hindus and the Muslims were there. They had to admit that Mr Huq claimed that the Muslims were as much Indians as others. They had a distinct religion, a distinct culture, to which they were passionately attached, and which for no consideration whatsoever they could afford to forget. He maintained that it was the view of every Muslim (cheers from the Coalition benches and ironical cheers from the Opposition benches) and that no Muslim was prepared to forego his distinctive culture, his religion or political identity in order to attain some unimportant temporal power. Referring to the future constitution of India, Mr Huq pointed out that they had instances in which the question of a Constituent Assembly had been considered by other countries which had Dominion Status and whose constitution had been drafted by a Constituent Assembly. He cited the cases of Australia, Canada and South Africa and said in all those three countries, there was homogeneity of race, homogeneity of language and homogeneity of culture which did not exist in India. Even in spite of this homogeneity, in all these three countries they had to experience great difficulties. He asked the House to realise what tremendous difficulties they would have to face in India if they tried to build up a constitution on the basis of a Constituent Assembly. The Muslims and other minorities would never be prepared to give up what they had been able to secure after years of strenuous endeavour. (Cheers from the Coalition benches). The Congress had not been able to arrive at a satisfactory solution of the communal problem. 'Why should we go to England,' concluded Mr Huq, 'to ask for independence? Independence was not given to anyone by anybody. Independence has to be fought for (ironical cheers from the opposition benches). Independence cannot be got by mere application and supplication.'

¹ Soon after the outbreak of the second world war, Resolutions on War were passed in the provincial legislatures in India, either agreeing (such as the non-Congress ruled Bengal and Punjab) or refusing (such as the Congress-ruled Madras and the United Provinces) to support the British war-efforts.

125. Gandhi's Statement¹

Harijan, 11 November 1939, *CWMG*, Vol. 70, pp. 335–38, For the Viceroy's broadcast, see *ibid.*, 427–28

Segaon
8 November 1939

I have read with respectful attention His Excellency the Viceroy's broadcast and his introductory remarks on the correspondence between himself and Shri Rajendra Prasad and Jinnah Saheb released by His Excellency. I welcome His Excellency's refusal to accept defeat and his

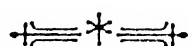
determination to solve what seems to have become insoluble. I share to the fullest extent His Excellency's anxiety to reach a solution. Without, therefore, waiting for the Congress reaction to these two declarations and purely for the sake of assisting the common cause, I would like to suggest that no solution is possible unless an acceptable declaration of war aims about India is forthcoming. The pronouncements hitherto made, whether here or in Great Britain, are after the old style, suspected and discredited by freedom-loving India. If imperialism is dead, there must be a clear break with the past. Language suited to the new era has to be used. If the time has not yet come for the acceptance of this fundamental truth, I would urge that further effort at reaching a solution should be suspended. In this connection I would remind British statesmen that what is wanted is a declaration of Britain's intention regarding her Indian policy irrespective of India's wishes. A slave-holder, who has decided to abolish slavery, does not consult his slaves whether they desire freedom or not.

Once a declaration to free India from bondage, not in stages but at once, is made, and interim solution will be found to be easy. Protection of rights of minorities will then become simple. The game of seesaw will cease. The minorities are entitled to protection, not in stages but to the fullest extent and in one single step. No character of freedom will be worth looking at which does not ensure the same measure of freedom for the minorities as for the majority. The minorities will be full-fledged partners in the framing of the constitution. How that can be attained will depend upon the wisdom of the representatives charged with the sacred duty of preparing the constitution. Britain has hitherto held power—this is inevitable in any system of imperialism—by playing the minorities against the so-called majority and has thus made an agreed solution among the component parts well-nigh impossible. The burden of finding of formula for the protection of minorities should be thrown on the parties themselves. So long as Britain considers it her mission to bear this burden, so long will she continue to feel the necessity of holding India as a dependency. And patriots impatient for deliverance will fight, non-violently if I fail and perish in the attempt. God's curse of war, I had hoped and still hope, would be turned into a blessing by Britain realizing that the one thing needful for her to justify and hasten and end of this was to free a great and ancient country like India from her yoke.

Believing as I do in the Viceroy's sincerity, I would urge fellow-workers not to lose patience. There can be no civil resistance so long as, first, the Viceroy is exploring the possibilities of a settlement, secondly, the Muslim League blocks the way, and thirdly, there is indiscipline and disunity in Congress ranks.

The second condition should not offend Muslim friends. So long as there is no workable arrangement with the Muslim League, civil resistance must involve resistance against the League. No Congressman can be party to it. I observe that my note in *Harijan* has shocked Jinnah Saheb. I am sorry for it. But at this stage I would not defend myself. I do not want to mar in any way the negotiations between him and Pandit Nehru which I hope will be resumed soon and pray will lead to communal peace.

Since making the above statement I have read the report of the further statement of the Secretary of State in the House of Lords yesterday. It leaves the main position unchanged.



126. In support of the Congress War Resolution

Free translation of a Tamil speech delivered by Anguswamy Chetty (as Chairman) at a socialist meeting in New Washermanpet held on 12 November 1939. Public (General) Department, 1939, Tamil Nadu Archives

12 November 1939

Comrades: We have convened this meeting to speak on 'The War and our duty' in accordance with the announcement made through hand-bills and newspapers. We have to consider the way we should ask people not to participate in the war. Some of the socialist leaders of Tamil Nadu who have been making speeches on the War have been arrested. Similar action has already been taken in Bengal and Punjab. In Madras B. Srinivasa Rao was warned against making speeches; he, however, addressed 10 to 15 meetings and was sentenced to two years' imprisonment. Next, Ramiah, Secretary, Coimbatore Textile Workers' Union, was arrested in Pollachi and was sentenced to two years' rigorous imprisonment yesterday. P. Jeevanandam, Secretary, Tamil Nadu Congress Socialist Party, has also been arrested and bound over for a year. Myself and Chenchiah offered sureties on this behalf but the Magistrate rejected our offer on the ground we were not solvent. We are still making efforts. And we are making efforts to apprise the people how unjustly the Police and the Magistracy are conducting themselves in this respect. It is British Imperialism that is ruling us. Do not forget facts. We must try to get Jeevanandam released. British Imperialism promised to grant Swaraj in 1914-18. They deceived us and perpetrated the Punjab massacre and hanged Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev. This is the 'present' that we got in the last War. Now they profess to fight for Poland. If they were sincere in their professions, they ought to have granted freedom to India. Negotiations are now in progress between the Viceroy and Gandhi. We must abide by the mandate for the Working Committee. The Congress will very soon begin the fight. Our country can be free only when we are prepared to sacrifice even our lives in the struggle. None of us should participate in this War. We should not contribute even a pie towards the War. We can have no salvation so long as this...

127. Congress Policy and Strategy

'Method in Madness', Editorial, *Independent India*, 12 November 1939

12 November 1939

Giving expression to a growing but suppressed volume of intelligent opinion, last week we asked what exactly did the Congress leaders propose to do. We wondered if they were working with any plan, and questioned if they really wanted a fight, or they were simply maneuvering for some compromise. We did not expect any straight-forward answers to these questions. Living in the rarefied atmosphere of self-satisfaction and sure of the confidence of a blind following, our leaders do not condescend to take any notice of such questions asked from lowly quarters. But the interests of the Indian people and the freedom of India is as much our concern as theirs. Therefore, our anxiety to understand where exactly we are being led compels us to depend on circumstantial evidence when direct questions fail to elicit straight-forward answers.

The last week has been eventful. Those events can be interpreted for finding the answers to our questions. Moreover, there have been incidental pronouncements which help the interpretation. Apparently, the events have been very imposing. They electrified the average uncritical Congressmen with the expectation of something big happening soon. Another fight was coming, let us prepare for it. Those were the slogans of the moment. Congress Ministries resigned one after

another. That was announced from authoritative quarters as the first step towards the direction of a big fight. Although the spastic shook his head and the cynic smiled knowingly, the non-political army of believers was greatly enthused. 'War Councils' were set up even by every single village Congress Committee. Everywhere lists of 'dictators' were prepared. By a stretch of imagination, one could see endless queues of prospective voluntary prisoners at the gates of all the jails of the country. It was proudly announced by the warders of those would be prisoners that this time the 'fight' was going to be even greater, because many more were prepared to go to jail than on previous occasions. Of course, the veteran general was implored to come out of his formal retirement and assume the command of the mobilized army of would be civil resisters.

But Gandhi does not lead except as a dictator; and why should a movement so ready to place itself under dictators on the slightest provocation fight shy of having a full-fledged dictator? So the general assumed the title of the Field-Marshal, and the army impatiently marked time. But his first order is an ice-cold douche. Repeating his familiar argument that the atmosphere of absolute non-violence being absent, Gandhi once again declared that the country was not ready for another struggle. His order was categorical. Holding the view I do I am not in a hurry to precipitate Civil Disobedience. He further made it known that mass Civil Disobedience was a thing of the past. Since he suspended it indefinitely, the new technique of struggle has received finishing touches in his mental studio. In this critical moment, when his followers were expecting orders for a resumption of mass Civil Disobedience, he came forward with the more perfected version of the technique. 'Non-violent technique demands the reduction of Civil Disobedience to the lowest terms consistent with national self-respect. That is clear enough. Neither political distinction nor normal martyrdom is any longer to be attained with the cheap price of a few weeks in jail. That privilege will henceforth be reserved for the elite. What then is the numerous army to do? Gandhi prescribes for their guidance 'preliminary inaction'. Unless the bitter pill is meekly swallowed, and the excitement of courting arrest is not foregone for the privilege of playing the holy wheel, Gandhi will abdicate his command.

Meanwhile, the Congress Ministries have resigned. Their resignation was announced as the first step towards a big struggle. It seems that the announcement was made in a moment of irresponsibility, without consulting the custodian of the conscience of all Congressmen. The resignation of Ministries was sanctioned by Gandhi but he did not say anything, nor anybody thought it necessary to enquire, what would be done after the imposing gesture was made. Even now, Gandhi writes: 'The resignation of Congress Ministries was a necessity. But the next step is by no means clear. Congressmen seem to be expecting a big move'. But he cannot oblige them, being of the opinion that under the situation as he understand it, 'it is well-nigh impossible for the Congress to organise a successful non-violent revolution through Civil Disobedience'.

If that is so, why did he sanction the resignation of the Congress Ministries? Why did he think it was a necessity? The only result of that move so far has been restoration of the I.C.S. Raj in the provinces. It has already been indicated what we are to expect from this immediate result of Congress strategy. The *Statesman* calls for the suppression of all Volunteer organisations. The machine of repression, once set rolling, will not stop there. Whatever little freedom political organisations and workers still possess will soon disappear. We pointed out this danger when we disapproved of the suggestion that Congress Ministries should forthwith resign. There would be some sense in braving this danger, if the resignation of the Congress Ministries was the signal for a large-scale countrywide struggle. Since our leaders did not contemplate that, it was either sheer irresponsibility or bad strategy to withdraw the Congressmen from office. The whole movement should not be risked for the sake of saving the face of a few bungling leaders.

The other consequence of the imposing gesture was a new declaration by the Secretary of State for India and re-opening of the negotiations at Delhi. It appeared that, by one single move, the Congress had compelled Imperialism to eat its words and sue for peace. It is not known at what new proposals the Viceroy made....

But something more important has happened while the country was spell bound by the imposing events of the last week. Quietly, but very definitely, those negotiating on behalf of the Congress have dropped the idea of complete independence and have been talking in terms of the Dominion Status. The demand now is that the British Government should make a declaration to the effect that immediately after the War India will be raised to the status of a self-governing Dominion. Of course, the position of the Congress leaders is not as explicit as all that. But for the British Government, anything, more than that is altogether out of the question. That has been made amply clear. Consequently, the Congress demand that India should be recognised as an independent nation, that imperialism should end itself, has been categorically rejected. Any negotiation after that can be carried on implicitly on the basis of the position of Imperialism. The real issue involved, therefore, is whether India should be granted Dominion Status immediately after the War, or there should still be some period of preparation. The British Government insists on the latter course. Presumably, the Congress is pressing for the former, and even in the case, what is wanted is only a declaration that after the War Dominion Status will be granted.

In view of these facts, it is permissible to assume that there is a method in the apparent madness of the policy, or lack of policy pursued by the Congress leaders. They are working with a plan. They do not want a fight. They are simply maneuvering for some compromise. The resignation of the Congress Ministries was a part of this manoeuvre. Otherwise, it should not have been followed by the period of preliminary inaction. Unless some thing is eventually done to back up the resignation of the Congress Ministries, the Congress will make a laughing stock of itself. The only thing that could conceivably be done, so long as the Congress remains under the leadership of Gandhi, would be resumption of Civil Disobedience. But Gandhi has definitely set his face against mass Civil Disobedience. If it ever takes place it will be reduced to the lowest term consistent with national self-respect. The terms will of course be determined by Gandhi and for the moment nobody can say what they will be. In any case, mass Civil Disobedience is practically ruled out of the perspective of our struggle.

For the moment, the sum total of the Congress policy is to do nothing, one way or the other. Gandhi has expressed the opinion that, whilst by their own action the British Government have made it impossible for the Congress to cooperate with them in the prosecution of the war, the Congress must not embarrass them in its prosecution. I do not desire anarchy in the country. Independence will not come through it. That is an amazing attitude. To take such an attitude of inaction and indecision, in a crisis is complete bankruptcy of leadership.

While repeatedly disowning any desire to bargain, our leaders have been doing something worse. They have been gambling. Nobody could believe that such a serious step as the resignation of the Congress Ministries would be decided upon by a group of responsible politicians, simply for enjoying the relaxation of inaction. There must have been some other motive. It was a speculative move, made on the assumption that the British Government could not launch upon a long war in Europe and expect to have the situation well in hand, without the cooperation of the Congress. That assumption implies that the present leaders of the Congress are willing to cooperate on certain terms. But it seems there is little doubt about those terms. But it seems that the British Government is not prepared even to make a declaration that dominion Status would be granted immediately after the War, and meanwhile some steps in that direction will be taken, subject to the limitations of the present Constitution....

The Congress leaders have again come back from Delhi, optimistic, though empty-handed. The fortune of India remains tied to the turn of events in Europe. That will determine British policy in India. Meanwhile, the Congress should observe inaction which is no longer voluntary, but obligatory. Having taken the step of withdrawing Congressmen from office on the assumption that the British Government could not do without the Congress cooperation, our leaders are in a quandary today. There are only two ways out of the impasse. One is (the) way of struggle, which is ruled out, because Gandhi does not want it, and it is generally believed that without his leadership there cannot be any struggle; the other way is the return of the prodigals without losing face. But the prodigals dare not return, unless called back. It still remains to be seen when the British Government will find it necessary to do so. Meanwhile the movement remains without any perspective, the leadership without any policy and the thousands of Congressmen even without the hope of receiving the order to fill up jails.

There may be a method in this madness. But it is a monstrous madness. How long will it last?

128. Frontier Congress Committee's Manifesto

Tribune, 21 November 1939

14 November 1939

'The British Government through the Viceroy's statement of October 17 has challenged the honour and self-respect of a proud people. It is now India's duty to accept the challenge and give a suitable answer and prepare the nation for a fiery ordeal.' So runs a manifesto in Pushto prepared by the Frontier Provincial Congress Committee under the direction of Frontier Gandhi.

The manifesto gives a synopsis of the events in India since the outbreak of war in Europe and details the Congress decisions in regard to War. The manifesto is 8 page leaflet in Pushto and is being freely distributed in Frontier villages and towns.

The manifesto asks for a clarification of Britain's war aims and as to why India has been involved in war without her willingness and consent.

Quoting *verbatim* the statement of the Working Committee, drafted by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, it says: 'How splendid is this statement. With what simplicity and truth and straight-forward friendliness it asks for an answer from Britain whether as a defender of democracy and freedom she was prepared to apply these to India. The British Government ought to have given a practical proof of their professions by introducing democracy in India. Here was a chance to do so. Then alone it would have been possible and proper for India to consider the question of helping Britain against Germany'.

But, the manifesto continues, Britain chose otherwise. The Viceroy made a declaration, which refreshes in all its painful vividness the old imperialist policy, which has been pursued in this unfortunate country for over 100 years. The Congress, as the representative of the Indian people, could not tolerate this affront and decided to withdraw, as a first step, their ministries and chalk out a new programme for achieving the goal of independence.... (Here the text of the Working Committee Resolution of October 22 is quoted in full).

'The Khudai Khidmatgar Movement, which merged itself in the All India Congress in 1931, has made boundless sacrifices in the cause of freedom, and in future, too, is ready to undergo every type of suffering for the attainment of India's goal as was abundantly proved by the movements of 1930 and 1931 in the Frontier Province.'

Giving briefly the history of constitutional reforms in the province, the manifesto observes that the sacrifices of the nation's youth compelled the British government to make the status of the

Frontier equal to that of the remaining provinces. When the first Legislative Council was formed in the Province in 1932, the Khudai Khidmatgars refused to cooperate with it. Those who sat in the Council always danced to the tune of the Britishers and made laws which proved obstacles in the path of progress. An era of repression began. And even the beloved leader of the Pathans was not allowed to come to the province. Speeches was (sic) banned and every kind of civil liberties suppressed.

'The nation had grown weary after two years of fight and wanted some respite and do some thinking. The Congress later decided to accept office in order to do some good to the nation and clear some hurdles. It succeeded to a certain limit and did what service it could to the people. It established liberty of speech and writing. Numerous political organisations freely functioned and even those who, until some time ago, were afraid of hearing the cry 'Inquilab Zindabad' began to raise it. But now the Congress was left with no other alternative but to leave office because it felt, and felt truly, that it could not help the cause by remaining there any longer.

'Our ministers have vacated the offices and are ready to face the rigours of a jail life at the mere word from their organisation. This fact loudly proclaims to the world that they were not lured to office for its own sake but with the single purpose of serving their people. They had no other interest in ministerial chairs.'

'We have complete faith in our cause and we are perfectly sure that we shall be victorious in the end and cover our flag with glory. We are bound to reach our destination and make it known to the world that Indians and especially brave Pathans can no longer carry the stigma of slavery on their forehead,' concludes the manifesto.

It (The manifesto) appeals to the youth not to be impatient and asks them to await instructions from their leaders and the Congress Working Committee and carry out, fearlessly and with determination and necessary skill, whatever plan is suggested to them and prove equal to whatever demands, in sacrifice and suffering are made of them.

129. Ending Misfortunes of Oppressed Classes: Aim of War

Abdul Ghaffar Khan's speech at Tungi, *Tribune*, 19 November 1939

19 November 1939

'The resignation of the Congress Ministries is a forerunner of a big but peaceful revolution. It is an open secret that no structure, howsoever strong it might be, can stand in the way of a flood. I can, therefore, assure you that no organisation, be it the Muslim League or the Hindu Mahasabha, will be able to successfully resist the Congress flood which is the demonstration based on the goodwill of the masses. The sandy mountain built by the Muslim League will surely be washed away by the huge currents of the Congress flood. The wise nations will draw a maximum benefit from this flood while the unfortunate communities will lose its existence by being washed away along with the flood. It is now high time that we should present a united front to the British Government and place our united demands before it in order to secure the freedom of our motherland. We are the champions of a peaceful revolution. In our opinion violence is deadly poison both for our country and community. If the Congress takes any action the 'Khudai Khidmatgars' will demonstrate that they are the true patriots. The war for independence is coming ahead. I appeal to you with all the earnestness at my command to be prepared for it after imbibing non-violence and discipline. The Muslim League have now been exposed in their true colours. Give a wide berth to the time servers.'

Thus spoke, Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, the 'Frontier Gandhi', at a huge gathering of the residents of the rural area of Peshawar district, assembled at Tungi to listen to their great leader.

Tumultuous reception was accorded to the 'Frontier Gandhi' by thousands of villagers including a large number of 'Khudai Khidmatgars' outside Tungi village. Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan accompanied by Mian Jafar Shah, MLA, and others was greeted on arrival by thousands of his followers a mile outside the village after which he was taken in a mile long procession to the town.

Mian Jafar Shah, who presided over the meeting in a speech brought home to the audience the circumstances leading to the present deadlock, and appealed to the public at large to sacrifice their everything at the bidding of their leader Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan.

Referring to the present war the 'Frontier Gandhi' reiterated that the present European war had a special significance and it would be no exaggeration to state that the political map of the world would undergo a radical change as a result of the war. 'In my opinion the present war has been declared to put an end to all the misfortunes of the oppressed and depressed classes of the world. You cannot possibly gauge the situation as a result of the present War. I am here today to bring home to you that the present time is not for you to sit idle, but to be prepared for the coming struggle. I appeal to you not to become the "Khudai Khidmatgar" in the name, but a real "Khudai Khidmatgar". The first and foremost duty of a "Khudai Khidmatgar" is to cement Hindu Muslim relations and to make no distinction between a Hindu or a Muslim'.

130. Ryot's support for Congress stand

Hindu, 21 November 1939

21 November 1939

Resolutions protesting against the statements of the Viceroy and the Secretary of State for India and approving the resolution of the All India Congress Working Committee on War were adopted at a meeting of the ryots of the Kangundi Zamindari held here this evening in the premises of the local Board Middle School. C.R. Parthasarathi Iyengar, MLA, Chittor, presided.

C.R. Parthasarathi Iyengar, MLA, said that the ryots should at this juncture agitate for making India into one indivisible whole and strengthen their national solidarity.

M. Ananthasayanam Iyengar, MLA (Central), said that their immediate aim should be the achievement of complete Swaraj, the wiping out of Hitlerism and solving communal and minorities problem. He asked the ryots not to despair about the failure of the Ministry to adopt the Zamindari Bill and assured them that if they all stood united by the Congress today they could achieve greater amelioration.

131. Congress Working Committee Resolution

CWMG, Vol. 70, pp. 370-73

22 November 1939

The Working Committee have noted with pleasure the response of the country to the policy enunciated by them regarding the war in Europe and its repercussions in India. This policy, based on numerous declarations of the Congress, was laid down in a statement issued by the Committee on September 14, and subsequent events have amply justified its wisdom and expediency. The course of the war and the policy pursued by the British and French Governments, in particular the declarations made on behalf of the British Government regarding India, seem to demonstrate that the present war, like the World War of 1914-18, is being carried on for imperialist ends, and British imperialism is to remain entrenched in India. With such a war and with this policy the Congress cannot associate itself, and it cannot countenance the exploitation of India's resources to this end.

The Working Committee's unequivocal demands was for a declaration of war aims in regard to democracy and imperialism and, in particular, how these aims were going to be applied to India. These aims could only be considered worthy, if they included the elimination of imperialism and the treatment of India as an independent nation whose policy would be guided in accordance with the wishes of her people. The answer to this demand has been entirely unsatisfactory, and an attempt has been made on behalf of the British Government to create misunderstandings and to befog the main and moral issue. In justification of this refusal to make a declaration in terms of the Working Committee's resolution, communal pleas have been advanced and the rights of the minorities and of the Princes pleaded as barriers to India's freedom.

The Committee wish to declare with all emphasis that no communal considerations arise in meeting the demand of the Congress. And the minorities, whatever their other differences might be, do not oppose India's right to freedom and independence. The Princes are represented by, and are emblems of, the Paramount Power in India. In the end, it will be the people of the Indian States who will determine what part they will take in a free India, though the British Government have consistently ignored their wishes in the matter which vitally affects them. In any event, the wishes of those who may oppose India's independence are, and must be, irrelevant to the declaration of the British Government's intentions. The Committee can only interpret this attempt to avoid a statement of their war aims and Indian freedom by taking shelter under irrelevant issues, as a desire to maintain their imperialist domination in India in alliance with reactionary elements in the country.

The Congress has looked upon the war crisis and the problems it raises as essentially a moral issue, and has not sought to profit by it in any spirit of bargaining. The moral and dominant issue of war aims and India's freedom have to be settled satisfactorily before any other subsidiary question can be considered.

In no event can the Congress accept responsibility of the Government, even in the transitional period, without real power being given to popular representatives. The Working Committee, therefore, approve of and endorse the reply dated November 3, 1939, sent by the Congress President to the Viceroy.

The Committee wish to declare again that recognition of Indian independence and the right of her people to frame their constitution through a Constituent Assembly is essential in order to remove the taint of imperialism from Britain's policy and to enable the Congress to consider further cooperation. They hold that the Constituent Assembly is the only democratic method of determining the constitution of a free country, and no one who believes in democracy and freedom can possibly take exception to it. The Working Committee believes, too, that the Constituent Assembly alone is the adequate instrument for solving communal and other difficulties. This, however, does not mean that the Working Committee will relax their efforts for arriving at a solution of the communal problem. This Assembly can frame a constitution in which the rights of accepted minorities would be protected to their satisfaction and, in the event of some matters relating to minority rights not being mutually agreed to, they can be referred to arbitration. The Constituent Assembly should be elected on the basis of adult suffrage, the existing separate electorates being retained for such minorities as desire them. The number of these members in the Assembly should reflect their numerical strength.

The declarations made on behalf of the British Government, being inadequate, have compelled the Congress to dissociate itself from British policy and war efforts, and, as a first step in non-cooperation, to bring about the resignation of all the Congress Governments in the Provinces. That policy of non-cooperation continues and must continue unless the British Government revises its policy and accepts the Congress contention.

The Working Committee would remind Congressmen that it is inherent in every form of satyagraha that no effort is spared to achieve an honourable settlement with the opponent. While a satyagrahi is ever ready for a non-violent fight, if it has to come, he never relaxes his efforts for peace and always works for its attainment. The Working Committee will, therefore, continue to explore the means of arriving at an honourable settlement, even though the British Government have banged the door in the face of the Congress. The Committee must, however, resist, by the non-violent methods of the Congress, all attempts to coerce the people of India along paths which are not of their choice and everything that is against the dignity and freedom of India.

The Working Committee appreciates and express their pleasure at the readiness exhibited by Congressmen for launching Civil Disobedience, should this become necessary. But Civil Disobedience requires the same strict discipline as an army organised for an armed conflict. The army is helpless unless it possesses its weapons of destruction and knows how to use them; so also an army of non-violent soldiers is ineffective unless it understands and possesses the essentials of non-violence.

The Working Committee desire to make it clear that the true test of preparedness for Civil Disobedience lies in Congressmen themselves spinning and promoting the cause of khadi to the exclusion of mill-cloth, and deeming it their duty to establish harmony between the communities by personal acts of service to those other than members of their own community, and individual Hindu Congressmen seeking an occasion for fraternizing with the Harijans as often as possible. The Congress organisations and Congressmen should, therefore, prepare for future action by promoting this programme. They should explain to the people the message and policy and implications of the Constituent Assembly which is the crux of the Congress programme for the future.

132. The Maharashtra PCC and the War

Independent India, 26 November 1939

26 November 1939

The Maharashtra Provincial Congress Committee met on 5 November 1939 to discuss the situation created by the war. More than 90 members attended the meeting which was presided over by its President N.V. Gadgil.

The Main resolution of the meeting concerning 'Present situation' was moved by Rao Saheb Patwardhan. The resolution approved of all that was done by the Working Committee, the directions that were given and the positions that were taken concerning the war since its commencement. The resolution further approved of the resolution adopted by the Working Committee and stated that any help to Britain in this war would amount to strengthening imperialism. The committee expressed satisfaction at the resignations of Congress Ministries as the first step in the direction of withdrawal of all help in the war. The resolution further stated the necessity of strict discipline in the Congress ranks....

The main resolution of the meeting was moved by a Congress Socialist Rao Saheb Patwardhan and it was supported by a Communist, Sardesai. Tarkunde moved an amendment to the resolution to specify the nature of the struggle and to suggest that in order that the coming struggle should be a mass struggle it should be based on the economic and political demands of the masses. With a view to that it was suggested that the primary Congress Committees should take up the local economic and other grievances affecting the day to day life of the masses and should carry on propaganda about the basic rights of the people, and should in particular vigorously work for the

early termination of the war as it was being fought neither for democracy nor was it in any way beneficial to the people....

It fell to the lot of the Communist Sardesai to oppose Tarkunde's amendment which sought to commit the PCC to a definite form of struggle in order that it may be a genuine struggle of the masses. Sardesai pleaded that such a committal was not necessary as Gandhi could be relied upon to do the needful. His was an inspired speech, inspired by the bosses of the PCC. Sardesai was paying the price for 'Unity' and it was a heavy price that he had to pay. He had to accept ungrudgingly Gandhi's leadership and agree to the strict observance of non-violence. It appears Sardesai has paved the way for a 'composite leadership' in the province. It is rumoured that the fifth seat on the Provincial Sub Committee is to go to Sardesai as a reward for this service.

But there was a funny incident observed by a few. Chitale, another 'communist' member of the PCC, had submitted another amendment which sought the incorporation of Tarkunde's amendment. This is a funny picture, Sardesai opposing the amendment, appearing more loyal than the king himself, and Chitale asking for its acceptance. Phatak from Bhusaval made a brilliant speech in support of the amendment. It was the finest speech of the day. He boldly exposed the hollowness of the resolution. He asserted that in order that the struggle should be a real struggle of the masses it should be based on issues touching the life of the masses which along would make it an effective struggle for freedom. The objective of national independence, if ever to be realised, shall be the outcome of a sustained mass struggle and will not come even if a few lakhs courted imprisonment.

Tarkunde also explained how independence could not come as a gift of imperialism by negotiations, even by filling in jails by thousands. He pointed out the necessity of basing the struggle on the live issue of the masses. When the amendment was put to vote both the 'Revolutionary Marxist' groups of CP and CSP voted against it and helped the Gandhites in defeating it.

133. No Clear Indication

Editorial, *Leader*, 29 November 1939

29 November 1939

The Working Committee of the Congress met and dispersed without giving a definite lead to Congressmen or a clear indication to the country of its intentions as regards the next step after the resignations of the Congress Ministries. There were long consultations and confabulations extending over several days, but they have not led to a definite decision. Consequently, the resolution which the committee has recorded is as vague as it is lengthy. The 'high command' of the Congress seems to be still wavering between mere non cooperation and active disobedience and this attitude is writ large on every line of the resolution. It speaks of the determination of the Congress not to 'countenance the exploitation of Indian resources' for the prosecution of the war, but it is significantly silent as to how it proposes to prevent the Government from getting recruits or financial help from those who are willing to cooperate in the war effort. The committee talks of resorting to action and yet mentions conditions which are not likely to be fulfilled.

Among these conditions are 'strict discipline,' 'non-violence' and 'harmony between communists'. If the civil disobedience movement is really to be started when these conditions have been fulfilled, and not till then, one may rest assured that it will never be started. For experience has demonstrated without much room for doubt that these conditions cannot be fulfilled, at least not in the near future. But experience has also shown that whenever Mahatma Gandhi thinks it

proper to launch a campaign of direct action, he can easily persuade himself that the necessary conditions have been fulfilled and he gone ahead. He may later discover another 'Himalayan blunder' in his action, but the discovery is made *ex post facto*. So the reiteration of the essential conditions can be no sure index of future plans. The fact that the 'high command' has again come to mean virtually the Mahatma, only helps to make the position still more mystifying. Whether the reiteration of the conditions is meant to prevent Congressmen from launching another campaign of direct action or to prepare the way for it, only the future will show. Perhaps, it will not be far from correct to say that the Congress Committee is sitting on the fence and its decision will depend on developments. Among which may perhaps be included the course of the war, but the principle factors are sure to be whether the British Government will yield to the Congress and also, whether 'Janab Jinnah Saheb' will at last smile a condescending smile. The obstacle to political advance is neither the Princes nor the Muslims. The real difficulty lies in the intransigence of the Congress and the reluctance of the authorities to take a substantially forward step. But if it comes to the Congress resorting to direct action to force the hands of the British, the communal disunity presents a very real obstacle. Political sagacity counsels caution and moderation which the Congress can ignore only at the cost of heavy damage to the interests of the country as a whole and of the Hindu community in particular. Secondly, eager as we are that India should be allowed to attain Dominion Status without unnecessary delay, for then only can she solve her own problems and be a tower of strength to the British Commonwealth of Nations, we do not in the least agree to its being made a condition precedent of India's cooperation in the war. For the fight which Britain and France have begun against Nazism is being waged for a righteous cause and, therefore, deserves the support of all who stand for peace and democracy against the forces of aggression and barbarism.

134. Government and Defence of India Rules

Y.A. Godbole to all District Officers, November 1939, Linlithgow Papers, Acc. No. 2194, NAI

I am directed to address you on use of the powers conferred by the Defence of India Act which will be brought into force in a few days and the Defence of India Rules which are already in force. In Russell's letter No. 2233-G, dated the 9 September 1939, all District Magistrates were requested to exercise restraint in the application of Rule 38 of the Defence of India Rules. I am now to communicate to you the instructions of His Excellency the Governor as to the policy to be followed in using the Defence of India Act and the Rules in view of the situation that has developed since His Excellency assumed charge of the Province under Section 93 of the Government of India Act.

2. It is apparent that the Indian National Congress desires to pursue a policy of restraint and that it would be reluctant to provoke a clash with authority. The activities of the extremist sections have not developed as rapidly as was anticipated, and while these sections must be closely watched, it is desirable at present to act with circumspection. While His Excellency has no intention of allowing order to be threatened or war activities to be impeded, it is advisable that the ordinary law of the land should be utilised as far as possible and that the provisions of Defence of India Act and Rules should only be used where the ordinary law will not suffice. Objectionable speeches, agitation and propaganda should normally be dealt with under the preventive sections of the Criminal Procedure Code unless the case is sufficiently imported to justify prosecution under Section 124A or 153A of the Indian Penal Code. Full use should be made of the preventive sections. Generally speaking powers under the Defence of India Rules should be used only to prevent anti-war activities which do not come within the ordinary law, but vigorous action should be taken to put a stop to such activities which do not come within the ordinary law, particularly, if

they affect recruiting either for the police or the army, payment of rents or taxes, or interfere with communications. If you consider that the situation in your district requires wider use of the powers under the Defence of India Rules than is contemplated in these instructions, you should refer the matter to Government through your Commissioner.

3. The Governor considers it necessary to impose two further restrictions on action by District Officers:

- (a) no fresh prosecution or proceedings should be taken with regard to acts committed before the date of the Proclamation under Section 93 of the Government of India Act;
- (b) while action should be taken to deal with any serious infringement of the law, District Officers should avoid taking action indiscriminately with regard to petty infringements of the law or against persons who are not really dangerous. In deciding whether to take proceedings or not, District Officers should consider not merely whether a technical infringement of the law has been committed, but whether the infringement has any intrinsic importance and is likely to do real harm. Allowance must also be made for the difficulties of Right Wing Congressmen who are to some extent compelled by the political position to go further than they desire both in speech and action. It is undesirable that they should be forced into a more extremist position by reason of official action, if this can be avoided. The position may change at a later stage if the Congress decides to go into active opposition, but unless that development takes place, action should be directed against those who are extremists or revolutionists. No prosecution should be undertaken against any ex-Ministers, Parliamentary Secretaries or members of the Legislative without any previous permission of Government. Such sanction will also be necessary in the case of a few Left Wing leaders who are of more than local importance. A list of these persons will be sent to you, and where prosecution is contemplated, the case should be submitted to Government for scrutiny before its institution.

4. His Excellency the Governor wishes it to be clearly understood that the instructions given above are not to be read as superseding the outline of policy communicated to you in Russel's circular No. 3218A, dated the 4 November 1939, with regard to the attitude of Government Officers towards the present crisis. These instructions are to be read not as superseding that circular, but as supplementing it with reference to the use of powers under the Defence of India Rules.

135. India and the War: An Attack on the Poor Masses

Vartman (Hindi Daily), Kanpur, 1 December 1939

Kanpur
1 December 1939

In less than three months unfortunate India is tasting the fruits of being a nation at war. The people of rural India are already poor but now their poverty is becoming even worse. The prices of foodgrains and other basic necessities have gone up and are shooting up rapidly. A packet of 25 needles which had sold in the market place for a paise now costs an anna. Those who have given up home-made razors and have now taken to the safety razor realize the value of money when buying blades. A packet of blades available for four annas now costs eight annas. Within days, the price of wheat, ghee and cotton have gone up. The swadeshi mill-made cloth costs more and more day by day. The pair of *dhoti* which cost two rupees and three-and-a-half annas till the other days now costs two-and-a-half rupees. The price of spices is also going up. Something which costs Rs 18

a maund one day costs Rs 34 the next. Not only that. Shopkeepers are raising the prices of everything indiscriminately....

We have received reports from all over the country about the fluctuating prices. Does this mean that officials in every state and every city are unwilling to take measures against profiteering? Why this change in policy? Don't the officials feel it necessary to ascertain why prices are soaring?

The chemists, in particular, are being particularly avaricious. Stocks have gone underground and essential drugs are being sold at a premium. Is the Government insensitive to all this? We wish to warn that this tendency towards unbridled profiteering is creating a very delicate situation. The provincial and Central Government must quickly pay attention, because discontent is bound to increase if the situation persists.

136. The Decisive Voice

Editorial, *National Front*, 31 December 1939

31 December 1939

A decision cannot long be delayed as India is being committed from day to day to a policy to which she is not a party, and of which she disapproves.

From statement of the Working Committee on the War issued on 15 September 1939.

Four months have passed since this statement was issued. That policy which the Working Committee declared India was no party to, has been pursued with impunity. Congress demand for clarification of British War aims has been most categorically rejected.

The Working Committee met on 22 December in the background of deepening War-crisis. All hopes of speedy end of the War had vanished. The War was going to be protracted. Its political effects were too glaring to be ignored. Repression had been intensified. In Madras, in Orissa, in U'P, vigorous drive against the most militant sections of Congressmen, against Communists, Socialists and Kisan Sabha workers had already begun. Economic distress had aggravated. Soaring prices of foodstuffs had already resulted in demonstration all over the country, in some towns clashes had taken place between the police and the people.

This was the political and economic background. What the Working Committee was expected to do was to put a resolute end to the policy of inaction, to seize the initiative, to take steps to prepare for nationwide struggle.

What did it actually do?

Once again it decided to continue the disastrous policy that has already caused widespread demoralization and is dissipating the fighting strength of the nation. It decided to continue the policy of 'wait and see'.

While recognizing the indisputable fact that the communal conflict has been deliberately intensified by Imperialism in order to maintain its domination, the Working Committee sought to evolve a formula for solving the communal problem within the framework of Imperialism and without a struggle against it. The Constituent Assembly, the struggle for which alone can smash the communal bonds and pave the way to real unity, was envisaged by the Working Committee as a glorified edition of the Round Table Conference meeting with the consent of Imperialism.

Above all the Working Committee emphasized that 'success of the programme of *khaddar* as an accepted symbol of non-violence, harmony and economic independence is indispensable.'

Utter political bankruptcy is writ large on every one of the major resolutions adopted by the Working Committee. A national leadership that faced with the gigantic tasks imposed by the World War can only fall back upon Charkha, betrays utter incompetence and lack of the capacity for leadership.

But this was not accidental.

Fearing mass struggle more than it hates Imperialism, frightened by the prospect that in the period of acute and increasing economic distress a mass political movement, once launched, will get beyond its control and break the bonds of Gandhism, the national leadership could only take shelter behind the plea of 'absence of communal unity' and absence of non-violent atmosphere' to conceal its abhorrence of struggle.

Through stalemate the ground is being prepared for compromise, for ignoble surrender.

The danger of compromise has not receded. It is becoming more imminent everyday.

Nation-wide struggle for freedom can be launched only by the Congress and conducted under its banner. But the national leadership will not move of its own accord—will not itself initiate the struggle. That task will have to be shouldered by the rank and file, by the masses of Congressmen. It is they who by initiating the struggle in their localities, struggle against the suppression of the civil liberties, against the economic effects of the War and by mobilizing the masses for political action, will be able to create such irresistible pressure as will move the entire Congress on the path of struggle. Inaction on the part of the Left, on the part of the rank and file, will be disastrous.

At this hour of grave national peril, at this hour when the entire glorious heritage of the Congress stands in danger of being liquidated, it is the masses of Congressmen that must step in and make themselves heard. It is they who have the decisive voice.

The Independence Day that falls on the 26th January must become a day of nation-wide demonstration against Imperialist rule, a day of irresistible demand for nation-wide struggle, a day of militant national unity for the battle for freedom.

The Working Committee has framed an Independence day pledge. Along with 'peaceful and legitimate methods,' Khaddar and Charkha have been emphasized as 'integral part of our constructive programme' and every Congressman is asked to take the pledge to 'spin regularly.' The Working Committee has further demanded 'that Congressmen who do not believe in the prescribed pledge, should notify their disapproval.'

This is nothing but side-tracking the main issue. That game was played once before at Tripuri. Then the main issue of struggle was relegated to the background and Congressmen were sought to be divided not on the issue of struggle, not according to the plan of action that they advocated, but on the issue of acceptance or non-acceptance of Gandhiji's exclusive leadership.

Today nation-wide struggle is on the agenda. The issue is whether the Congress is to continue to present policy of inaction, a policy that is bound to lead to ignoble surrender, or, whether the Congress is to seize the initiative and launch struggle. It is this which is the burning question of the day. It is on this issue that the masses of Congressmen must speak. But the Working Committee does not want that. Hence it asks irrelevant questions, hence it attempts to cloud the main issue.

The game must be defeated. And that can be done by concentrating attention on the central issue, by mobilizing Congress Committee and masses of Congressmen to speak on the issue of struggle—to demand that the period of inaction be ended and struggle launched. A regular campaign must be launched to record a decisive opinion for the policy of struggle. That opinion must express itself on the Independence Day in a clear and unequivocal manner, in a manner which even the High Command cannot ignore.

Chapter 3. Princely India

GENERAL I: CONGRESS AND PRINCELY INDIA

1. Discontent in Princely India

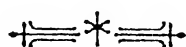
Vartman (Hindi daily), Kanpur, 6 January 1939

[Extract]

The lamp glows brighter when it is about to be extinguished. This is exactly the condition of our princely states. The British Government had already crippled them and now the people have begun to raise their voice against their exploitation. How long can the officers of the state put up with this? They cannot fight the British Government. Yes, they can stay on only with the help of the government by crushing the people. That is the only way for them and that is what they are doing.

After the Congress Resolution was passed at the Haripura Session (to the effect that the Congress would not interfere in the affairs of the princely states), the officials in these states have unleashed an unbridled attack on the people, with the result that within a year, the people in many of the princely states of Madhya Bharat, South India and Rajputana have had to launch an open struggle and undertake *satyagraha*. Terrible atrocities have been committed in Mysore, Travancore and other states and this state of affairs continues. Many other small states have emulated their example. Their calculation was that the Congress would not interfere and the incidents in Mysore and Travancore gave a new fillip to their intention. But they found that in Rajkot the Congress unexpectedly joined¹ in the fray. This did act as a warning to the smaller states and the princes announced some minor reforms to mollify the people. The concessions were almost negligible from the point of view of the people in British India but it is a major victory to have gained even this for the states people. Benaras, Andhra and some other states have agreed to 35% of the membership to their administrative councils being elected by the people with the condition that they will have the right merely to express their opinion....

¹ See below, 'Gandhiji on struggle in Rajkot', 30 January 1939.



2. Quit Orders on Congressman: Repression at Gobardhanpur

Amrita Bazar Patrika, 13 January 1939

Cuttack

11 January 1939

Two orders under Sec. 144 CrPC had been served on S. J. Phanindra Nath Pal, a member of the Utkal Provincial Congress Committee and prominent leader of Kisan movement in Orissa, prohibiting him from holding a meeting at Gobardhanpur, which S. J. Pal had organised on the 9th January and asking him to quit the limits of Sukindia Police Station at once and not to enter the same for a period of two months.

It may be recalled the Sub-divisional Officer of Cuttack went to the place with a contingent of armed Police force on the 8th instant to see that the orders were served on S. J. Pal and also to stop the meeting, which was to be held on the 9th instant at Gobardhanpur.

This is the second time that such orders had been passed on S. J. Pal, the first one being in April last. This is the first time that steps have been taken under the Congress regime for stopping have been taken under the Congress regime for stopping a meeting of States people within the British territory as in the words of the notice, 'similar agitations in other states have very recently resulted in great unrest involving serious consequences.'

The following are the full texts of the two orders, served on S. J. Pal:

'Whereas it has been made to appear to me that you are attempting to incite the people, particularly the illiterate aboriginal tribes, into violence by delivering speeches and holding meetings near about scheduled caste leaders who have some following in their respective Provinces.'

The resolution further states that the views expressed by Dr B.R. Ambedkar specially the idea of repudiating the Poona Pact are harmful to the progress of the Country and to the cause of the scheduled castes themselves.

Yet another resolution on the Viceregal declaration states that in the opinion of the committee the declaration of the Viceroy 'in spite of Mahatma Gandhi's friendly and respectable attitude is vague, and inopportune.'

'The committee endorses the War resolution of the AICC passed at Wardha¹ and feels that there is still time for the British Government to avail of the friendly offer of Mahatma Gandhi and secure active co-operation.'

¹ The war resolution passed by AICC at Wardha on 23 October 1939.

3. Hurl Back the New Offensive

Editorial, *National Front*, 29 January 1939

The struggle of the States people has entered a new phase. We are in the midst of a crisis that calls for clear vision and a bold lead.

The key to imperialist strategy in recent years has been its attempt to tame the Congress, keep it away from mass struggle, to entrap it within the constitution. It deliberately created the illusion that it would not intervene between the Princes and their people.

This illusion was at the back of the Haripura resolution on Non-intervention. Take Imperialism at its word. Try it out. The Congress with its immense influence and great prestige could successfully mediate between the people and their rulers and get them their democratic rights. This was the line of our leadership.

Non-intervention policy remained on paper, to be insisted upon from above, not followed in practice down below. Struggles broke out everywhere scattering to the winds all neat calculations based on the continued apathy of the people. Congressmen in growing numbers were drawn into these struggles. This stage reached its conclusion when Sardar Patel placed himself at the head of the Rajkot struggle. The foremost champion of Non-intervention at Haripura ended by being the direct violator of that policy on the eve of Tripuri.

Struggles grew apace, sweeping over one State after another. Imperialism rubbed its eyes but soon unsheathed its sword. Promise of Non-intervention gave place to the practice of direct intervention to save the Princes with the entire might of the imperialist State machine. The veil has been torn off, the States people stand face to face with British bayonets; and yet they move on.

In Rajkot a settlement arrived at by Sardarji himself has been broken by the Ruler,¹ after a meeting of all the Princes with the British Resident.

In Jaipur Sjt Bajaj saved the Raj from the revolt of the Praja of Sikar but the settlement arrived at with him has been observed more in the breach. His entry has been banned from the State. The *Praja Mandal* of which he, a member of the Working Committee, was the head has been declared unlawful.

In Travancore, a new offensive has been started. The State Congress has withdrawn the charges against the Diwan as suggested by Gandhiji and demanded by the Diwan. Repression was being concentrated against the workers, students and Youth League and now it has been let loose against the State Congress directly instead of the grant of responsible government. Sir C.P., the Diwan, is the favourite of the Political Department.

Imperialist intervention, for the blindest to see, is taking place in Orissa. 1200 soldiers from the Indian Army have been stationed at Cuttack and are being sent to the surrounding States in the numbers required. The Congress Ministry is being pressed by the Governor to apply the Princes Protection Act and not stand in the way of the extradition warrants.

These are not isolated incidents but evidence of a new calculated offensive by Imperialism. A mere Thakur of Rajkot dare not show the door to Sardar Patel of the National Congress. The Ruler of Jaipur by himself has not the courage to shut out the Treasurer of the Congress. The Governor of Orissa has had to turn his tail before. Would he have, on his own, given an ultimatum to the Ministry?

No. All that is taking place is the carrying out of a centralized plan, hatched by the Political Department of the Government of India in alliance with the entire bureaucracy to drown the States people's movement in blood and get the Congress Ministers to do as much of its dirty job as possible.

Imperialism has derived its own lesson from recent developments. The States people's movement is sweeping everything before it; the foremost leaders of the National Congress have to march at its head. It is gathering a new momentum, by getting more and more support from the rest of the Indian people. Imperialism has decided to strike the first blow, before it is too late, before the States people's movement becomes irresistible by merging with the national movement of the Indian people.

Princely autocracy is being battered down by the movement of the States people. The main pillar of the Federation is collapsing. How can Imperialism sit in peace?

The growth of the State people's movement and its crying demands are drawing in Congress workers, as its cadres, and more, even Congress leaders, as its leaders. Provincial administration, being in the hands of the Congress Ministers, is not used to help or at least is not available to suppress the movement in the States. This is not what the 'Burra Sahebs' had expected from the Congress, nor hoped for from the Congress Ministers.

The boldness of the imperialist offensive comes from an intimate knowledge of all our weaknesses. Our enemy is fully aware of the existence and growth of the constitutional mentality at the top of our ranks. It hopes that the Congress would draw in its horns when faced with a determined policy of ruthless repression. The imperialist game is to break the unity of the Congress or at least prevent it from rapidly following a uniform policy to checkmate its own.

The danger is real. Gandhiji writes in the *Harijan*:²

‘It is time for the Princes and the Central Government to evolve a common policy of action. Or is the Jaipur method the common policy of action as some tell me it is? I can only hope that it is not.’
The pious hope is in defiance of hard facts.

Further on he writes:

‘I can only hope against hope that the Jaipur authorities will shrink from precipitating an all-India crisis.’ This is Gandhiji’s way of saying that the Congress will fight.

But as long as the policy of ‘hope against hope’ continues we lag behind and Imperialism has the initiative. This makes the result of the battle uncertain.

It is no longer the issue of one State nor even the issue of all the States alone. It is British Imperialism versus the National Congress. The democratic movement of our own kith and kin, in our own land, is being directly suppressed by our own enemy. The honour of the greatest Congress leaders like Sardarji, Bajaj and Gandhiji is at stake. The existence of a Congress Ministry hangs in the balance. It would be blindness to shirk the issue.

Non-intervention is dead. Imperialist intervention, in the States against the people, can be successfully defeated by the National Congress as a whole going to the direct and open aid of the States people. Against the enemy of all the Indian people the might of the whole people, led by the greatest people’s organization—the National Congress—must be hurled.

If in this critical hour Imperialism is able to successfully blackmail or humbug us and keep the Congress away from the State people’s struggles they would be crushed and the Congress would have lost half the battle against the Federation. It will be the turn of the Congress Ministries next. They would be pressed to cut themselves adrift from their popular base and become engines of repression, against the mass movement. The final step would be the imposition of the Federation. One capitulation would lead to greater capitulations and final defeat.

Now or never! We must fight and crush the imperialist offensive just at the point it has been launched.

Local and provincial Congress Committee must actively aid the State people’s struggle in their respective areas.

The All-India Congress must unify and coordinate the struggles in all the States as on struggle.

Solidarity campaigns must be organised throughout the country for the State people’s struggles. Volunteers and funds must be poured in from outside.

Congress Ministries must neither refuse to apply the Princes Protection Act nor execute extradition warrants nor lend their police force. Every facility must be given to the organisers to start Satyagraha Camps etc., in the Congress Provinces when there are no civil liberties in the States.

Imperialism would beat a hasty retreat the moment it saw that it has to come to grips with a determined and united Congress. With its weakened position in the international areas and a

world war looming larger and larger it is not likely to risk immediately an all-in battle with a united Indian people.

¹ For details, see *CWMG*, Vol. 68, Appendix I, pp. 469–71.

² *Harijan*, 21 January 1939.

4. Gandhi, the Raj and the Indian States:

G.D. Birla to Mahadev Desai, 30 January 1939

G.D. Birla, *Bapu: A Unique Association*, Vol. 3, Bombay, 1977, pp. 223–27

*New Delhi,
January 30, 1939*

My dear Mahadevbhai,

I met Laithwaite¹ last Saturday and after that I asked you to send me all the papers relating to Jaipur, Rajkot and Bapu's correspondence with the Viceroy. I met Laithwaite again today and had a pretty long talk.

On Saturday, when I met him, he had kept a note, perhaps dictated by the Viceroy himself, for being read to me. It was meant for Bapu as well for me. He had received Bapu's last letter to which he had not replied and the reply in a way was meant to be sent through me. The note said something like this:

I have received a very friendly letter from Mahatma and find myself in agreement with a lot of what he says. But I fear he has failed to realize my own difficulties. I have spoken to Birla in the past frankly expressing my views about the position of the Indian states and also my sympathy with the idea of democratisation. In fact, a lot has been done during the last twelve months of which no account is being taken. I am collecting materials to show what advances have been made generally in the Indian States during this period.

Responsible government and personal rule are two opposite things. Gandhiji knows how long it took the Indian provinces to get responsible government. In the States the personal rule still continues. It could not be changed in a day. The time factor is of great importance. Gandhiji should therefore realize the delicate task which I have to perform. And while my sympathies are with the ultimate object, I fear I have serious complaints to make against Gandhiji that he is not helping my task. In a way my hands are being forced.

There are two aspects of the question of the Indian States. There is the administrative sphere and there is the constitutional sphere. So far as the administrative sphere is concerned, the paramount power is entitled to interfere for good government or for better judiciary and for such other sort of things. And I am ready to interfere for such things.

As regards constitutional advances it is not possible for the paramount power to do anything. This is a matter which entirely rests with the ruler himself. The princes too are frightened. Even those princes who are supposed to be advanced in democracy are not free from troubles. The cases of Mysore, Travancore and Baroda could be cited as examples.

As regards the specific cases of Jaipur and Rajkot, I am not well versed with the facts. I know only what I have seen in the Press. But it is my feeling about Rajkot that what is sought to be done there is being done, not purely in the interest of the state people, but to establish supreme control of the Congress over the state.

As regards Jaipur, I feel that what little has been done by way of proclamation for establishing some Advisory Board should have been given a fair trial.

This was the sum and substance of the aide memoire which was read to me by Laithwaite.

I pointed out to him that as regards Jaipur I was well acquainted with the facts and therefore could at once say that His Excellency was thoroughly misinformed. I related to him the whole history and the part that I played to get a settlement. Thereafter, to avert a crisis, I made the following suggestion on my own behalf which I said I would put to Jamnalalji if it were acceptable to the Durbar.

There were three points which threatened a crisis: (1) ban on Jamnalalji, (2) recognition of the Praja Mandal and (3) release of Sikar prisoners.

The first thing was to remove the ban immediately. Laithwaite said the time was very short and the matter too advanced to retrace the steps. On this I made a suggestion that Jamnalalji after being arrested may be left out of Jaipur territory. I would try to persuade him not to go again soon on the condition that the ban was removed thereafter and the question of recognition of the Praja Mandal and the release of the Sikar prisoners were taken up for negotiation with me. He said he would consult His Excellency about it but he agreed that Jaipur was simpler problem. I told him that once Jaipur was out of the picture, we might then concentrate on Rajkot.

Last evening I received all the papers from you which I read very carefully and this morning I again had a talk with Laithwaite for over an hour. He said he had discussed the question with His Excellency and put himself in touch with the Durbar and he found that the Durbar held very strong views about the whole situation. At the time when the thing had not come up in the Press, it would have been easier for him (Laithwaite) to help but now the matter had gone too far. But the Durbar could readily do one thing. They could arrest Jamnalalji and very politely leave him out of the border. And he added, 'I can also inform you in confidence that a new Dewan is going in place of Beauchamp. I will not give you the name but I hope and feel that he would be a more sympathetic and tactful man. His Excellency also is going to Jaipur about the first week of March. If Jamnalalji could be persuaded to remain off Jaipur until the new man comes, I feel every hope could be entertained of the thing being made much more pleasant. I admit that the demand is not too big but there has been a lot of complication and I find more than this I cannot do.'

I replied, 'This will not satisfy Jamnalalji because the more important thing is freedom of speech and freedom of association. Unless that is guaranteed, the problem is not solved. The release of the Sikar prisoners could perhaps wait for some time more but not the question of freedom of speech and until that is assured, I do not see how I could persuade Jamnalalji to keep away from Jaipur.'

He said, 'But surely the Praja Mandal has not been declared illegal.' I replied, 'It has not been declared illegal but the implication of the Ordinance perhaps is this that it cannot function as a legal body. Can you assure me that until the new Dewan comes, the Praja Mandal would be allowed to function as a legal body although it may not be recognized? Because even then it would mean something.'

He again asked me, 'What are the evil consequences from which the Praja Mandal suffers just now for not being recognised?' I said, 'If it is allowed to function as a legal body, even though it may be not be recognised, then I don't think in practice it suffers. On the other hand, if the implication of the last Ordinance is that although it has not been declared illegal, still it cannot be allowed to function, then the evil consequences are obvious.'

He said he could not say anything as to what would be the position of the Praja Mandal but that he would let me know tomorrow.

Then I opened the question of Rajkot. Laithwaite said, 'About Rajkot, it is a more difficult problem. A settlement was arrived at between Sardar and the Thakur. We don't know anything about it. If we interpret the letter by the Thakur to Sardar literally, then it means only this that

while Sardar was entitled to make recommendations, the nomination ultimately rested with Thakur. There may have been a different understanding but we don't know what took place between the two men and therefore we have to put a literal interpretation on the letter. The demand of the Muslim League does not seem to be unreasonable and since we had no hand in the settlement, how could we be expected to press the Thakur?

I replied, 'The charge is that it is Gibson² who is responsible for this break.' He said, 'But we don't admit this charge.' I told him the evidence was the note which he said he had not seen. The note of conversation between the Thakur and Gibson could not be accepted as an authentic document.

About Orissa we had some discussion but nothing important emerged.

The net position of the Viceroy is covered in the note to which I have made reference above.

Laithwaite was also complaining that His Excellency felt sore the way in which Gandhiji had touched the Orissa problem in today's *Harijan*. He said Gandhiji was not helping the Viceroy at all in putting the things in such an unpleasant language.

He agreed with me that the best way to avoid a crisis would have been to clear the decks of some of the unpleasant issues like Rajkot and Jaipur. But he feels that they too are helping and their own helplessness is not taken into account fully.

Yours sincerely,
Ghanshyamdas Birla

¹ John Gilbert Lathwaite (b. 1894) educated at Trinity College, Oxford; Under Secretary of State for India, 1923-24, specially attached to Prime Minister Ramsay Macdonald in 1931; Private Secretary to the Viceroy and Secretary to the Governor-General in 1939.

² Edmund Currey Gibson (b. 1886), educated at Merchant Taylor's School and at St. John's College, Oxford; joined the Indian Civil Service in 1910; Commissioner, Ajmer-Marwara, 1924; Political Agent to Governor General, Eastern States, 1933-34, Resident at Gwalior, 1934-37; Resident, States of Western India, 1937-42.

5. The Struggle Ahead

Independent India, Vol. 3, No. 7, 12 February 1939

12 February 1939

'On the issue of responsible Government in States we appear to be at the door of a big crisis as Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru has put it. Gandhiji's writings¹ in the *Harijan* express his determination to precipitate a crisis on the issue unless the Paramount Power mends its way. Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel is also speaking in the same strain and judging from these utterances the time does not seem to be far off when the Congress Ministries will be asked to resign and a call will be given for a nation-wide struggle against the Paramount Power and its puppet Native Princes and Chiefs. For as graphically stated by Pandit Jawaharlal we cannot shake the same hand in one tract of the country that smites us in another. We welcome these declarations of our leaders and the call for action that is implicit in them. Action on the issues of responsible Government in the States and the liberation of the States' people from feudal tyranny was long overdue. It is as well, as we have been emphasizing since long, one of our best means to fight the Federal Scheme sought to be imposed upon us. We are glad to find that the intransigent attitude of the Paramount Power has at last compelled our leaders to realize the real significance of the struggles of the States' people and to decide to rush to their rescue. We look forward to an immediate countrywide struggle for the assertions of the rights of the States' people and for the ending of the unwarranted interference of the Paramount Power under the inspiring leadership of the Congress President. We have not the

least doubt that the moment the call is given the nation will respond to it and will be prepared to storm the citadels of feudalism, the most powerful bulwarks of British Imperialism in the country. But to ensure the success of the struggle it is necessary to guard against certain pitfalls. The issue of the struggle is neither the breach of a solemn agreement by the Thakore Saheb of Rajkot or the ban on Seth Jammalal Bajajji's entry into Jaipur. These are but samples of what is happening on a much larger scale and in a more atrocious form all over princely India. The issue of the struggle should be the establishment of responsible Government in the States and the termination of feudal exploitation of the States' people. And as these demands are common to the subjects of all the States, the struggle must start simultaneously in all the States and must be backed by appropriate action in British India. It cannot be and must not be restricted to a State or two. Its suspension or termination cannot be also made dependent on the possible relief that may be granted in the two specific cases seized upon by Gandhiji. For our fight is for the eradication of the disease and not for the removal of symptoms. The Rajkot and Jaipur incidents are but symptoms of a disease that is eating into the vitals of the Indian nation. The struggle must, therefore, proceed with the definite objective of ending the feudal tyranny of Princes. It will then mature into a movement for ending the Princes' order and thus become an integral part of the general national struggle for the democratization of the country. Talk of compromise and withdrawal will then be out of place until the immediate goal of the establishment of responsible Government is reached. Experience of the mass movement led by Gandhiji in the past compel us to warn the nation against these pitfalls. We hope and trust that in the struggle that lies ahead of us there will be no side-tracking of issues, no confusion of aims and no forgetfulness of the ultimate objective.

¹ See *Haryana*, 7 and 28 January 1939

6. Forward All

Editorial, *National Front*, 12 February 1939

'The call is coming to us again. India calls and the call grows louder and more insistent. On your feet men and women of India, on your feet! The time for marching approaches. On your feet now!'

We are in the throes of an all-India crisis. The National Congress and British Imperialism stand arrayed against each other. Rajkot and Jaipur are the battle-fields. The fate of our national movement hangs in the balance.

Let there be no doubt, no self-complacency. We are negotiating a new turn in the course of our national movement. Rajkot and Jaipur are not local skirmishes. They are focal points of a new stage in our struggle. Old barriers are crumbling, new plains are visible. The people are on their legs, pulling with their entire might. The leaders are being led forward. Drift, as we have known, is disappearing. Struggle, as we have desired, is coming. The blind are finding their eyes. Victory is within reach.

The hand of the people has wrought the changes. The irrepressible struggle of the States people has turned the scale. What we are witnessing is the culmination of a whole year's struggle, not in one State or two but throughout the country, from Kashmir to Kanyakumari and Rajkot to Ranpur. A new movement has created new problems and suggested its own solution. A new era has dawned.

The venerable champion of isolating the States' people from the Congress movement, the father of the non-intervention policy, Mahatma Gandhi, has been seized with inspiration to glorify the solidarity of our people, under the leadership of the Congress.

'They (the people of Rajkot) will prove that they are the rulers of Rajkot under the paramountcy of the Congress.'

Non-intervention is dead. Its swan song is being written by its own author.

So far, running the Ministries was the only means to the end. The masses were not to be set in motion. The utmost the Ministries could do when faced with struggle in the Native States was to take up a negative attitude, not permit the police to be lent to the Princes, not to agree to the Princes Protection Act being used in their provinces, not to execute the extradition warrants. Now Gandhiji is planning that Ministers take positive action, put actual pressure on Imperialism, tell the Governors to represent to the Viceroy to call off imperialist intervention in the States or face their resignation as an alternative. Parliamentary strength is being used to strengthen the extra-parliamentary movement of the people.

'It is a new path. The Congress attention and energy are diverted almost for the first time, from British India to the States, formally and really.' (*Times of India*, 8 February).

The movement has entered a new path but our leadership is dragging itself along, not marching erect, and casting wistful looks at the old hog which has been left behind. This constitutes a new danger.

'I once more appeal to His Excellency the Viceroy to study the question more deeply than he has done,' writes Gandhiji. This is yet nursing the illusion that, the justice of our plea can move the hearts of our rulers.

'It is insufferable that the Congress which is today in alliance with the British Government should be treated as an enemy and an outsider in the States which are vassals of the British,' writes Gandhiji in the same article. This is foisting on facts a myth insufferable to the movement. This is not regarding the national enemy as an enemy, this is expecting Imperialism to open for us the gates of our freedom. This blindness would lead us astray.

'Let me state the issue clearly. I seek no interference in the affairs of the State. I seek non-intervention by the Resident of Rajkot,' says Gandhiji. This is not stating but ignoring the issue. Non-intervention by the Congress has been blown sky-high in the course of actual struggle. Only treachery to the movement can revive it. There can be no going back. Signs are not wanting that the entire national leadership has been caught unawares by the rising tide of struggle.

In his address to the Gujarat P.C.C. Sardar Patel envisaged:

'The possibility of a grim struggle such as has not been witnessed before in India.'

He further declared: 'This was the final battle so far as the States were concerned. If they left Rajkot alone they would be committing a sin for which there was no expiation. Be ready to fight at an hour's notice.'

These are noble sentiments and true. The immediate necessity is to carry them out in practice, and clearly realize what we are up against.

Gibson is no erring individual. He is the direct agent of Imperialism at Rajkot and is doing the job of his masters. The Rajkot settlement between the Thakore and Sardar was an immense blow at Imperialism. It shifted the balance in favour of the Congress and against the Federation. If the Congress, through a people's movement gets a democratic regime inaugurated in India, then the States delegation to the Federation would not be a bloc for Imperialism but form one bloc with the people's representatives from the provinces. If the people's movement is allowed to grow, democracy to advance unchecked, how long will princely rule last? If the faithful allies of Imperialism become puppets in the hands of their own people, how can they aid Imperialism against the whole Indian people? The Rajkot settlement, therefore, meant in the eyes of Imperialism a new and bad precedent for the rest of the Princes and for its own rule in India.

These are the issues that have raised their head at Rajkot. That is why Imperialism feels at bay. That is why a reign of 'organised goondaism' has been inaugurated at Rajkot.

We are in an immensely strong position. The world is rushing headlong towards a war. In such a critical situation Imperialism wants to avoid a clean combat with the Congress and keep its own rear safe. The obvious line for it should be to seek to localise the conflict and avoid a nation-wide struggle.

The *Times of India* has already put forward the suggestion:

'It is not possible to endeavour to resolve Mr Gandhi's doubts and difficulties by personal contact?'

We would be fools if we allowed Imperialism to treat Rajkot and Jaipur as issues apart from the question of democratic rule in the States, from the question of inauguration of the Federation, from the question of the Congress leading and uniting the whole of our people. This would be playing into the hands of Imperialism, giving it time to marshal its own forces and disrupt our own.

State people's struggles are not local but a nationwide phenomenon. They have passed the stage of local struggles and settlements. They have become a part of our national movement and have created a crisis of national importance. If we allow them to be localised we scatter our forces, keep them divided instead of unifying them.

The only way to support States' people's struggles, the only way to advance our own strength is to fit them in the National Plan of Action against the Federation already suggested by President Boşe.¹ Rajkot and Jaipur are not islands, nor the crisis a fit subject for negotiation between Gandhiji on the one hand and Linlinthgow on the other. State's people's demands must be incorporated in ultimatum, to be given to Imperialism. States' people's struggles must be directly and actively supported by the Congress organization as such, as part of our preparation to resist the Federation and to mobilize the masses against it. This is the call from Rajkot and Jaipur.

Along these lines the Right and the Left can and must be united. Direct aid to the States' people's struggle by the Congress as a whole. Nation-wide preparation to implement the ultimatum to Imperialism itself! Behind these the whole Congress must stand as one. A united Congress would be irresistible.

¹ See *Indian Annual Register*, Vol. I, 1939, p. 312

7. Pandit Nehru on Indian States

Indian Social Reformer, 25 February 1939, pp. 404-05

It is a great advantage to all concerned to have at the head of the States' People's movement a man of transparent sincerity like Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. In dealing with him one knows exactly where one is. He is a sworn enemy of British Imperialism. At all times and on all occasions he openly proclaims his unswerving antagonism to it. He does not call himself its opponent today and its ally tomorrow. Of all Congress leaders of the first rank, he is, the one man who, so far as we know, has seldom or never had occasion to explain that what he said had some other meaning than what it had been generally understood to mean according to the sense commonly attached to words. Another advantage is that he is not a hedgerow politician. He has a political philosophy and does not despise books. One, therefore, feels in approaching a pronouncement by him that one may safely dispense with tentative and conditional expedients.

The presidential address which the Pandit delivered at the All Indian States People's Conference held at Ludhiana on the 15th February, was evidently intended to be authoritative as an exposition

of the policy of the Indian National Congress on the problem of Indian States. The latest phase of that policy is illustrated by the Satyagraha raids encouraged, promoted and controlled from Congress headquarters. This the Pandit definitely endorsed and justified. From his point of view, he can not do otherwise. He regards the States much as Lord Dalhousie regarded them. Dalhousie was actuated by the passion to paint the whole of India 'red' because he thought that alone would bring peace and prosperity to the people of this country....

Dalhousie and Curzon were arch-priests of British Imperialism but passages in their dispatches and speeches, bear a close affinity to the sentiments expressed by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, its arch enemy, in his Ludhiana address. The Pandit defined his plan for the States thus:

There is no independence in the States and there is going to be none, for it is hardly possible geographically and it is entirely opposed to the conception of a united free India. It is conceivable and desirable in the case of the larger States for them to have a great deal of autonomy within the framework of an Indian Federation. But they will have to remain integral parts of India and the major matters of common concern must be controlled by a democratic Federal centre. Internally they will have responsible government.

Without reading much between the lines of this rough sketch of the Pandit's plea, one can see three main points emerging from it. The States can have no independence. The larger States may be allowed to exist as integral parts of a democratic federation exercising powers devolved on them from above. The smaller States, by implication, must cease to exist. The tolerated States must have 'responsible government'. On the first point, the Pandit maintains that the States have no real independence now and what is called 'independence' in their case is a fiction invented by the British Government for its own imperialist ends. This is Imperialism with a vengeance and, if Dalhousie and Curzon were present in spirit at Ludhiana, they would have clapped their hands in sheer delight at this Indian, a product of English Public School and University like themselves, preaching their gospel with a thoroughness which they themselves had not dared even to imagine. Though the Pandit implied that the smaller States will have inevitably to go, he extolled and held up the example of Aundh, decidedly one of them, for introducing 'responsible government'. Apparently, even small States can survive if they introduce 'responsible government.' In other words, the distinction between the greater and the smaller States, is not to be absolute. All can save themselves by donning the life belt of responsible government.

What is this 'responsible government'? Every government is responsible ultimately to the society which sustains it. Even a martial law regime in the last resort must have the support of a modicum of public opinion, as Dicey points out. But the phrase has come to be used in a special sense in which it is associated inseparably with the Parliamentary system on the British model. This system, it may be observed in passing, is as unsuitable to a small state like Aundh as a steam plough to turn up the earth in a half acre backyard. A Panchayat, not a Parliament, is what it needs. The Parliamentary system cannot function in a State, small or large, deriving its powers by devolution from a superior authority. This is so elementary in constitutional theory and practice, that we are surprised that Pandit Jawaharlal should have overlooked it in his plan.

The Parliamentary system or responsible government is not an infallible means of ensuring good or even tolerable government. The Balkan States had 'responsible government' and some of them have it even now. But they had none of the attributes of 'responsible government'. There was no such thing known to them as civil liberty. The Pandit frequently claimed the authority of history for his propositions. But he overlooked one important chapter of contemporary history, which shows that the Parliamentary system and responsible government cannot be mechanically introduced into every country like the radio or the gramophone. The Turkish Dictator, Kemal Ataturk, tried to introduce it in his Turkey with all the authority of a man who had saved his

country from going under foreign domination. He had secured it Independence: he wanted to gift it responsible government. The attempt collapsed in melo-dramatic circumstances.

'This system (prevalent in Indian States) has vanished', said the Pandit, 'from the rest of the world.' May we remind him that 'responsible government' has fared no better. If survival is the test, 'responsible government' has no more value than the system which the Pandit condemns, of the States. Would the Pandit prefer the system which have succeeded 'responsible government' in European countries today to that which prevails in the average Indian State? The fact is, the world has yet to evolve a system of government which will be free from the humbug and hypocrisy of the Parliamentary system, as well as from the tyranny of a soulless autocracy. Meanwhile, it is not wise to thrust 'responsible government' which, as it functions today in Great Britain, France and the United States, is, as the Pandit well knows, the complete negation of responsibility, upon the Indian States as a condition of their being allowed to exist.

The Pandit wants to get rid of British Imperialism and the States at one stroke. Historical precedents on which he rightly lays store, suggest that one of the larger States will take the stage on the disappearance of British Imperialism. The Pandit is totally mistaken in thinking that British Imperialism has kept the States alive. The fact is that they have survived because they have roots in the national life which British rule had not, and if either has to go, it will be British Imperialism and not the home-made autocracy. We have drawn a parallel between Dalhousie and the Pandit. Dalhousie's policy led to the Indian Mutiny. Is the Pandit sure that his drastic proposals for the States, if given effect to, will lead to no upheaval? It certainly will. He is playing with fire, trying, without intending it, to bring on a conflagration. A foretaste of what may happen is already visible in the disturbances caused by the satyagraha operations in Jaipur and Limbdi. The woes of the Spanish people which have wrung the heart of the Pandit, will pale into insignificance compared with what India will have to pass through if the Pandit's desires come to pass.

8. Jawaharlal Nehru on Conditions in Indian States

Statement to the Press, Allahabad, 30 May 1939, *National Herald*, 31 May 1939, *SWJN*, Vol. 9, p. 439

Allahabad
30 May 1939

Wrapped up as we are in a hundred problems and in manifold difficulties, do we overlook the tragedy that is being enacted from day to day in scores of Indian States? Yet there is no problem more vital for us, no tragedy more painful than this.

Rajkot has attracted a great deal of attention, and rightly so far Gandhiji was associated with it. It has somewhat overshadowed other states struggles for a while. But we must remember that Seth Jamnalal Bajaj is still a prisoner in Jaipur, that in Bharatpur, satyagraha is going on, and in large numbers of states fierce repression is in progress.

Gandhiji made a generous gesture of goodwill by advising a suspension of satyagraha in the states and his advice was followed by the people. Not so by the authorities in the states, who mistaking the gesture perhaps for weakness, have intensified their repressive policy. Political agents and residents carry on in a leisurely way as if it mattered little or nothing at all. How many scores of thousands of refugees were starving or how many others were being crushed by coercion! They made vague promises which they interpret in their own way. But the cup of sorrow and suffering is overfull and those who imagine that conditions are static will be painfully disillusioned.

Among all the states in India, the Orissa states stand out today in their agony—Talcher of broken promises and wandering, starving refugees and Gangpur¹ where large numbers were done to death and others driven to the jungles. It is astonishing that all this should happen and there should not even be a proper inquiry. I suggested an inquiry² into the Gangpur firing by three very competent persons³ but the reply was 'no', because some private and departmental inquiry had already taken place. No one knows exactly what happened and all manner of horrible tales reach one's ears. How long will this intolerable burden and tyranny continue?

No one in India can forget the sufferings of these poor backward countrymen of ours, doubly oppressed by feudalism and imperialism. No one dare say that their freedom can wait till we are free. There is no freedom for us or for anyone in India so long as insolent and irresponsible power crushes the people of the states.

¹ Several persons were killed and many injured when police opened fire on 28 April 1939 at Gangpur to disperse the crowd which had collected to demonstrate against the arrest of some persons.

² For details see *SWJN*, Vol. 9, p. 345.

³ The three suggested people were Dr D. Souza, retired judicial commissioner, Sind, Harekrushna Mehtab, and Baltej Shah Gilani, ex president, All India Catholic Conference.

9. Fight in the States: Congress Strategy

Article by Pattabhi Sitaramayya, *Tribune*, 7 June 1939

7 June 1939

'There is a feeling that neither Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, nor myself is actively doing anything on the States question. Pandit Nehru has just explained his position and it is, perhaps, appropriate that I should explain mine. Technically I have ceased to be the President, having given place to my successor. That should absolve me from all responsibility. But this is only the logical and technical way of talking and I do not wish to stop short at that nor even press that kind of argument into service. Let me state the present position as I see it.'

The sappers and miners of an army have cleared the forest, built roads, dug wells, tested water sources, water contents and given the signal for the ornate march under the orders of its general. Is it right for people to ask when the battle is raging in all its fury, as to where those pioneers are? They disappear when the general is in the firing line. He has his own fighting units and reserves and plans of action. He marches forward, now delivers an attack, now cries halt, now gets a drench, now orders fire. He is his own master. If his generalship continues, strategy holds the field. That is where we are.

People who are filled with doubt are tossed about hither and thither only because they do not discern the standpoint of the general. They do not understand this strategy. You should not judge, therefore, the stops and starts of satyagraha by the strategy of the bloody wars. Nor even if you did, you would not ask a Jaffrey or a Foch as to why he gave up Kutilamara or allowed General White to surrender.

Mahatmajī took Viravalla¹ at his word and destroyed the one barrier that stood between him and his adversary. That word was that it was Viravalla's desire that the Thakore Saheb should be trusted. That barrier was Sir Maurice Gwyer's² Award. All misunderstandings have now ceased and all mistrust has now disappeared. We are starting on a clean slate once again. It was so during the Gandhi-Irwin negotiations. There was much of muttering and meaning when the enquiry into the police excesses was given up. When Lord Irwin said: 'Mr Gandhi do you think I do not know all these things, do you want to humiliate me by all these enquiries?' That was the signal for

Mahatmajī to rise to his heights. He took counsel with his colleagues and with their support gave up the demand for enquiry into the police excesses. This surrender was subjected to serious criticism later in circles which wanted to enjoy that very humiliation.

Congress strategy under Satyagraha is not meant to be spectacular presenting forced marches, fusillades of fire, the rout of the enemy and conflagrations everywhere. Satyagraha, of course, has its own surprises and should be studied from the Satyagrahic standpoint. Mahatma Gandhi did not join this movement of the States people with all his might and strength till recently. It was our duty to keep the banner flying till he took command and when he has assumed the command we only await orders, in the fullest hope that even the Rajkot tangle is being fast unravelled. It is the first brick in the citadel of the States that is being pulled out of the fortress wall and when that has yielded, the rest will fall.

¹ Darbar Viravalla (b. 1888); educated at Rajkumar College, Rajkot; Deputy Political Agent, Palanpur; Dewan Porbander State; Dewan, Junagarh State; Political Secretary of Rajkot State in 1931.

² Sir Maurice Linford Gwyer (b. 1878); educated at Westminster School and at Christchurch College, Oxford, Fellow, All Souls College, Oxford, 1902–16; Barrister of Law, Inner Temple, 1902; Legal Adviser, Ministry of Shipping, 1916–19; First Parliamentary Counsel to Treasury, 1934–37; First Chief Justice of India 1937–43.

10. Jawaharlal Nehru on the Indian States

Foreword to the series of pamphlets issued by the All India States People's Conference, Bombay, June 1939, *SWJN*, Vol. 9, pp. 443–44

*Bombay
June 1939*

The problem of the Indian States has come to the forefront in Indian politics and it is everywhere recognized that an urgent solution of it is necessary. It is not only the problem of 582 political units in India but of scores of millions of people who inhabit these areas, and the human side of it, though often forgotten, is the most important. The Congress has repeatedly affirmed, and there can be no denial of this, that the states are inseparable parts of India and their fate is bound up with the fate of India as a whole. From the point of view of the Indian struggle for freedom therefore, apart from other reasons, the states cannot be ignored.

There is today a great deal of argument about the states and the newspapers are full of accounts of popular movements and official repression. It is well known that politically and economically the states are very backward and many of them are still in the feudal age. A great part of their revenues goes to support the princely houses that rule over them and only a small fraction is spent on the advancement of the people. All this is known vaguely but of detailed knowledge and accurate information there is a singular lack. All of us have heard of the score or so of well-known states but we are completely ignorant of the hundreds of others. What are they? Where are they? What happens within their borders? A thick veil covers them and even prying eyes may not peep in. These states themselves dislike publicity and discourage visitors, except those superior persons who go occasionally to join in vast organised slaughter of inoffensive animals.

If we are to consider the problem of the states scientifically and methodically, we must have facts and data. Mere sentiment is not enough. What are the states? What are their populations, areas, and revenues? How did they begin, and what are these treaties which have suddenly become so important? How many treaty states are there, and what of the others? What are the administrations like, and where does the money go? These and like questions arise and we can only answer them by collecting facts.

The purpose of this series of pamphlets, issued by the research department of the All India States People's Conference, is to place such facts before the public. There is nothing new about the facts, but so far they have been buried in official reports and other somewhat inaccessible books. It is hoped that this simple presentation will be found helpful in understanding the fundamentals of the problem. Argument can then proceed on a sounder basis.

The first pamphlet deals with the populations, areas and revenues of the states. This simple information, as the reader will discover, is itself extraordinarily revealing. Other pamphlets will follow.

11. Gandhiji on the Struggle in the States

Harijan, 24 June 1939, CWMG, Vol. 69, pp. 359–361

Segaon
20 June 1939

I am sorry that my recent statements about States have perplexed even those who have hitherto had no difficulty in understanding my writings or my actions. But the Rajkot statements, my actions in Rajkot, and the statement on Travancore have made 'confusion worse confounded'. Pyarelal and latterly Mahadev have been manfully trying to interpret for the readers of *Harijan*, both my writings and doings. I know that they have somewhat helped to clear misunderstandings. But I observe that something is required from me directly. I must therefore try to give the implications as I understand them of my recent writings and actions.

I had better first say what they do not imply. Thus my ideas of civil disobedience—individual, group or mass—have not changed, nor have my views about the relations between the Congress and the Princes and the people changed. Nor has my view undergone any change that it is essential for the Paramount Power to do its duty towards the people of the States—a duty which it has woefully neglected all these years. My recantation had reference only to my distrust in God, in whose name the fast was undertaken, and my seeking to supplement His work by Viceregal intervention. For me to rely upon the Viceroy, instead of God or in addition to God, to act upon the Thakore Saheb, was an act of pure violence which the fiat was never conceived to imply or use in the remotest degree.

The positive implication of the Rajkot chapter in my life is the discovery that the non-violence claimed for the movement since 1920, marvellous though it was, was not unadulterated. The results though brilliant would have been far richer if our non-violence had been complete. A non-violent action accompanied by non-violence in thought and word should never produce enduring violent reaction upon the opponent. But I have observed that the movement in the States has produced violent reaction on the Princes and their advisers. They are filled with distrust of the Congress. They do not want that they call interference from it. In some cases the very name 'Congress' is anathema. This should not have been the case.

The value of the discovery lies in its reaction upon me. I have definitely stiffened in my demands upon would-be satyagrahis. If my stiffness reduces the number to an insignificant figure, I should not mind. If satyagraha is a universal principle of universal application, I must find an effective method of action even through a handful. And when I say I see the new light only dimly, I mean that I have not yet found with certainty how a handful can act effectively. It may be, as has happened throughout my life, that I shall know the next step only after the first has been taken. I have faith that when the time for action has arrived, the plan will be found ready.

But the impatient critic will say, 'The time has always been there for action; only you have been found unready!' I cannot plead guilty. I know to the contrary. I have been for some years saying that there is no warrant for resumption of satyagraha.

The reasons are plain.

The Congress has ceased to be an effective vehicle for launching nation-wide satyagraha. It has become unwieldy, it has corruption in it, there is indiscipline among Congressmen, and rival groups have come into being which would radically change the Congress programme if they could secure a majority. That they have failed hitherto to secure it is no comfort to me. The majority has no living faith in its own programme. In any case satyagraha through a majority is not a feasible proposition. The whole weight of the Congress should be behind any nation-wide satyagraha.

Then there is the ever-growing communal tension. Final satyagraha is inconceivable without an honourable peace between the several communities composing the Indian nation.

Lastly, there is the provincial autonomy. I adhere to my belief that we have not done anything like justice to the task undertaken by the Congress in connection with it. It must be confessed that the Governors have on the whole played the game. There has been very little interference on their part with the ministerial actions. But the interference, sometimes irritating, has come from Congressmen and Congress organizations. Popular violence there should not have been whilst the Congressmen were in office. Much of the ministerial energy has been devoted to dealing with the demands and opposition of Congressmen. If the Ministers are unpopular, they can and should be dismissed. Instead they have been allowed to function without the active co-operation of many Congressmen.

It will be contrary to every canon of satyagraha to launch upon the extreme step till every other is exhausted. Such haste will itself constitute violence.

It may be said in reply with some justification that if all the conditions I have mentioned are insisted upon, civil disobedience may be well-nigh impossible. Is that a valid objection? Every measure carries with it conditions for its adoption. Satyagraha is no exception. But I feel within me that some active form of satyagraha, not necessarily civil disobedience, must be available in order to end an impossible situation. There must be either effective non-violent action or violence and anarchy within a measurable distance of time. I must examine this position on a future occasion.

12. Agitation in Indian States: Crown Representative to Secretary of State, Telegram R., 7 July 1939

Linlithgow Collection, Official telegrams between Viceroy and Secretary of State, (Governor General's series), July 1939-Dec. 1941, Acc. No. 2170, NAI

Eastern States:

Khandpara—Agitation continues. Ruler has revised constitution with wider franchise and central Sabha containing proportion of elected members.

Dhenkanal—Ruler announced in Durbar constitutional reforms based on Panchayat system.

Gangpur—Press, reports about refugees leaving State exaggerated. Socialist camps at Tankole Budapank still encouraging agitators.

Mysore—Working Committee of State Congress has decided to approach State Government and place demands of Congress before them asking for a settlement before September 1st.

Rewa—There has been vigorous Congress propaganda at meetings in various parts of State.

Sarila—Slight revival of agitation reported.

Hyderabad—Week's arrests total 568, of whom 131 from State, 23 unknown and 415 British Indians. Situation quiet again in Hyderabad city.

Madras States:

Travancore—Pursuant to their decision accepting Gandhi's advice, President and two other members of State Congress have applied to Dewan for interview. He will probably see them today the 7th instant.

Rajputana:

Alwar—No further move by Praja Mandal reported for registration. Wahabi propaganda in two villages.

Bharatpur—Total agitators convicted 41, trials pending 13. Six of the seven men arrested on Ultimatum Day apologised, three released. Four women remain in girls' school converted into jail. On June 29th there was demonstration at Dib Police Station, when 16 arrested. United Provinces Premier reported to have advised Praja Mandal to transfer Headquarters from the United Provinces to State territory.

Jaipur—Jathas of three and four outsiders appeared June 29th and July 3rd respectively. Former apologized immediately and left by train. Latter, who are blue shirts from Allahabad, arrested but since apologized. State proposes release three and prosecute leader. 68 arrested apologized and all except 11 convicts released. Jhansi blue shirt leader said to have issued statement condemning whole movement. Judgment in mosque case pronounced June 27th. One sentenced to one year and ten months. No repercussions.

Nothing special to report in other States.

13. Gandhiji to the Princes

Haryan, 1, July 1939, *CWMG*, Vol. 69, pp. 402-04

Abbotabad
8 July 1939

Several persons interested in the States have asked me what in my opinion is the minimum that all states should guarantee in order to come in line with the enlightened opinion in what is called British India. I cannot vouch for what the Congress would say if it had to give any such opinion. Perhaps it would be wrong for the Congress to have or to give such opinion. A democratic body can only pronounce opinion on events as they happen. Be that as it may, the opinion I am about to give is only my own and binds no one but me.

The minimum then that all States great and small can give is:

1. Full civil liberty, so long as it is not used to promote violence directly or indirectly. This includes freedom of the Press and freedom to receive newspapers which do not promote violence.
2. Freedom to the people of the States to form associations and educate public opinion in favour of establishing responsible government in their own States.
3. Freedom for Indians outside particular States to enter them without let or hindrance so long as their activities are not directed towards the destruction of the States in question.
4. The privy purse should be limited so as not to exceed one-tenth of the income where it ranges between Rs 10 to 15 lakhs per year, and in no case should be ~~purse~~ exceed Rs 3 lakhs per year, and should include all the private expenses of the Ruler (e.g., palace

expenses, cars, stables, the Ruler's guests) except those which have reference to performance of public duty which should be clearly defined.

5. Judiciary to be independent and permanent and free of all interference. In order to ensure uniformity of practice and strict impartiality, there should be an appeal to the High Court of the Province within which the State in question is situated. This may not be possible without a change in the law governing the High Courts. It can, I imagine, be easily altered if the States agree.

I have purposely avoided reference to constitutional reform. This will depend upon the situation as it exists in every State. I should assume that where local public opinion demands it, the Ruler is bound to respond.

The most contentious part of my minimum is perhaps the right of appeal to the High Courts. And yet unless some such arrangement is made, pure justice cannot be guaranteed in the States whatever may be said to the contrary. This is one institution which the British have built up with patient care. No doubt the High Court procedure is expensive and far from expeditious. The poor of the land cannot reach it. The processes are cumbersome. Often the unscrupulous win. With all their faults, however, and except where high politics have come in, the decisions of High Courts have been just and fearless. I can think of no easy and ready-made check save that of the High Courts on the vagaries, and sometimes subservience to the executive, of the judiciary in the States. But I am not wedded to my solution. If something else equally effective can be devised, I should have no objection.

One thing seems to me to be clear. If the transfer of power from the Princes to the people is to take place without violence, and if the Princes are to live as such, they will have to adapt themselves to the changed circumstances. Very few people have faith in my plan, viz., the plan of Princes voluntarily parting with power and becoming real trustees. The critics say it is Utopian and against human nature. I must advocate it so long as I believe in its practical possibility. The world is inevitably moving to self-destruction or to a non-violent solution of all its ailments, moral, social, economic and political. The threatened world war will bring us nearer the desirable solution if a respectable part of it survives the impending catastrophe. Whoever recognises that the only escape from the impending fate is a non violent solution will, therefore, apply it to his own problems, whether they are domestic, communal or any other. Non-violence is a universal law acting under all circumstances. Disregard of it is the surest way to destruction. It is only a question of time.

The princes would not solve the riddle by the proposed combination with Garasias, Muslims, Scheduled Classes, and their own subjects who are too cowed down to resist. It is a combination that is bound to break under its own weight. It is itself an inflammable mixture. And a combination against whom? The Congress which seeks to represent all these not excluding the Princes themselves? The Congress will die a natural death when it ceases to be national in every sense of the term. It has that unbroken tradition for the past fifty years. Whatever transformation it undergoes, it is the only institution that will succeed British Imperialism whose days as imperialism are numbered. British politicians realize this. They would not resist, do not want to resist, its transformation or destruction. The imperialism is increasingly becoming a dead weight if only because it is based on highly organised violence. The Princes may ignore the Congress for a time. But they cannot for all time. Some are reported to have said that after all it was composed of Banias who would show the white feather on a few knock-out blows on the head by the strong combination pictured above. I would like respectfully to point out that the Congress is not composed of Banias who can be counted on one's finger-tips. The millions who took part in the civil disobedience fights were not Banias. I do not thereby mean to imply that they were desirous of

giving blow for a blow. Many could. But they had forsworn violence. Many Congress heads were broken by something severer than knock-out blows. All I wish to imply is that the Congress is not composed of mere cowards. Non-violence and cowardice go ill together. I can imagine a fully armed man to be at heart a coward. Possession of arms implies an element of fear, if not cowardice. But true non-violence is an impossibility without the possession of unadulterated fearlessness.

I beseech the Princes not to underrate the Congress as a force in the country. Its policy still remains non-violent. I admit it is fast tending towards violence. I and a few of my companions are putting forth every effort in favour of non-violence. I ask the Princes, for their own sakes and for the sake of the country that has given them birth, to throw in their weight in favour of non-violence. It seems to be touch-and-go with the Congress. It will either become growingly non-violent or will presently become a violent organisation, not necessarily doing immediate deeds of violence but preparing itself for ultimate violence. It would not harbour cowards. If it does, it will cease to be the power it has become. Every Indian, high or low (there is no high and no low for the Congress) has to make his choice.

14. Agitation in Indian States: Crown Representative to Secretary of State, Telegram R., 21 July 1939

Linlithgow Collection, Official telegrams between Viceroy and Secretary of State, (Governor General's series), July 1939–Dec. 1941, Acc. No. 2170, NAI

Mysore—State Congress leaders twice attempted to see Dewan but were refused. Working Committee was to meet on 19th July to discuss future course of action.

Madras States:

Travancore—State Congress delegation met Dewan on 18th instant and talks are continuing. President of State Congress has indicated in letter to Dewan that (a) State Congress does not act or intend to act as agent of any outside organisation or individual, (b) they have decided to approach Government direct without any interference from outside, (c) any consultation they may have with outside individuals or bodies will in no way obtrude in their dealings with Government, and (d) they have indefinitely suspended civil disobedience and have no such programme in view.

Rajputana:

Alwar—Praja Mandal which is still unregistered has intervened in municipal elections.

Bharatpur—Four jathas sent to State from Goverdhan in United Provinces. Bharatpur day was celebrated on July 11th by hartals in three towns. Attempt to reopen Praja Mandal office was prevented. Movement appears to be supported only by towns people. Total so far arrested 101, convicted 58, apologized 19, pending trial 24. Last week's arrests at Deeg should be 22 not 41.

Jaipur—Muslim League publicly condemned Satyagraha movement. No further jathas. Local Muslims, if left alone, likely to approach authorities for reasonable settlement. Congress propaganda directed against shikar department.

Hyderabad—Week's arrests ten, all British Indians. Constitutional reforms announced on July 19th. Muslim shops observed almost complete hartal in Hyderabad city and some 500 black flag demonstrators turned out but were ordered home by Bahadur Yar Jung.

Punjab States:

Malerkotla—Kirti Kisan, Praja Mandal and Congress adherents planned large meeting at Kothala for July 17th to be addressed by 'politicians' from British India. Little support for meeting was evinced inside State but Durbar considered it wise to prevent ingress of inflammatory orators

from outside. Party of 14 outsiders led by Mangal Singh, MLA (Central), arrived by train, afternoon July 16th, and declined to obey order forbidding entry into State and were taken into custody. Changing their attitude subsequently they left the State. No serious incident occurred and all quiet now in State.

Dhami—Separate report has been sent regarding riot on 16th July.

Gwalior—Meetings were held at various places at which resolutions were passed characterising recent reforms as unsatisfactory and retrogressive. Main objection apparently being the formation of the 'Samant Sabha' or Upper Chamber.

Eastern States:

Khandpara—Situation reported calmer. Raja has arrested leading agitators.

Talcher—Kanungo, Orissa Minister, making efforts to secure return of refugees.

Nandgaon—Strike continues. Congress office being opened in Rajnandgaon and bulletins circulated in town.

Nothing to report elsewhere.

15. Agitation in Indian States: Crown Representative to Secretary of State, Telegram R., 28 July 1939

Linlithgow Collection, Official telegrams between Viceroy and Secretary of State, (Governor General's series), July 1939–Dec. 1941, Acc. No. 2170, NAI

Western Indian States:

Cutch—Meherally who has been holding meetings in Cutch left on July 18th. It appears two of leading agitators have been bought off by Durbar.

—An agitator who announced his intention of disobeying all State orders and spreading discontent among people has been arrested.

Mysore—State Congress Working Committee decided to continue efforts at reapproachment with Government till September 1st.

Rajputana:

Bharatpur—Four women arrested on 21st July. Two persons arrested at Dig for taking out Praja Mandal flag. Three United Provinces Congressites threaten coming to Dig as self-constituted enquiry committee.

Jaipur—Local Muslim still not agreed over approaching authorities but no more jathas. Praja Mandal attempting to increase influence in rural areas by concentrating on social service. Jamnalal Bajaj corresponding with medical institution outside State regarding treatment.

Hyderabad—Week's arrests 236 all British Indians except six from States. Muslim demonstrations against reforms have continued but peacefully. General reaction to reforms appears to be avoidance of hasty pronouncement and neither local Muslims nor International Aryan League seem decided yet on future action.

Gwalior—At meetings held at Bhilsa, Morena and Shajapur speakers complained reforms recently announced were illusory. Signs of Hindu-Muslim tension continue aggravated by passage of jathas to Hyderabad all activities of the Khaksar party.

Benaras—28 political prisoners were released recently on undertaking of no further unlawful demonstration.

Punjab States:

Malerkotla—All quiet.

Dhami—One man injured in firing on July 16th has since died bringing total dead to two. All quiet in State made by Congress elements in Simla to keep Dhami refugees from returning. Congress have set up Enquiry Committee in Simla under Chairmanship of Duni Chand (Punjab MLA). Bhag Mal Sautha is on hunger strike but health reported to be still satisfactory. Rana of Dhami has issued proclamation in State that no action will be taken against those of his subjects concerned in July 16th incident. He also visited the seven injured persons in Simla hospital and gave them similar assurance.

Eastern States:

Talcher—Refugees reduced to about 1,000.

Nothing of importance to report from elsewhere.

16. Agitation in Indian States: Crown Representative to Secretary of State, Telegram R., 26 August 1939

Linlithgow Collection, Official telegrams between Viceroy and Secretary of State, (Governor General's series), July 1939–Dec. 1941, Acc. No. 2170, NAI

Important—No. 1689-P. Following is summary for the week ending August 24th:-

Central India: Congress activities continue in Rewa and several other States.

Mysore—Arrested members of State Congress sentenced to three months' imprisonment. Protest meetings were held.

Deccan States:

Ramdurg—Satyagraha threatened by Lingayat agitators in British India to effect release of local leaders under trial.

Western India:

Rajkot—Mahadev Desai visited Rajkot, August 21st, and saw Viravala and others in connection with work of Reforms Committee.

Palitana—The agitator mentioned in Summary, July 28th, has been convicted and sentenced to a year's imprisonment and has gone on hunger-strike.

Rajputana:

Udaipur—Prajā Mandal will probably concentrate on famine relief.

Bharatpur—Total prosecutions to date 135, apologized 33, convicted 965, undertrial 6. Praja Mandal 'War Council' had addressed Durbar announcing decision not to compromise.

Jaipur—Muslims. His Highness the Maharaja saw deputation. August 15th. Deputation accepted Durbar's terms and all the remaining prisoners were released. Effect reported to be good. Praja Mandal. Before leaving State on August 12th, Bajaj ordered all open activities to cease. He is expected to return shortly ostensibly to arrange future programme before undergoing full course of medical treatment in Bombay or elsewhere.

Eastern States:

Khandpara—About 40 refugees are living in Balgarh in Puri district. Agitation from there and Kantilo continues but situation under control. Majority of population willing to work new constitution.

Talcher—Few refugees remaining in camps probably irreconcilable.

Gangpur—About 400 refugees and absconders from Munda village are reported to be living in Simdega sub-division, Ranchi district.

Nandgaon—Ruiker defied ban on entry into State, arrived by train on August 20th, was arrested and taken by car to Dongargarh whence he returned to Nagpur by train that night. Demonstration by strikers dispersed quietly. Situation in mills unchanged.

Punjab States:

Potawdi—Satyagraha is being offered as a protest against enforcement by State of Act for Registration of Associations. Full details lacking but it is believed that a considerable number of arrests have been made.

Gwalior:

Rampur—Reference Summary August 11th. Secretary, All-India Hindu Mahasabha, has since sent a letter to the Private Secretary to Nawab informing him of the constitution of Enquiry Committee. Nothing so far known about Committee's activities in State, but certain Hindus recently released from Hyderabad jail have been holding meetings with others. It is reported that Hindu Mahasabha interference in Rampur would inevitably result in serious communal disturbances in the State and the surrounding districts of Rohilkhand. Situation is being closely watched by State authorities.

Nothing of importance to report in other States.

Weekly telegraphic Summaries will be discontinued hereafter.

17. Gandhi on the Princes

Harijan, 16 December 1939, CWMG, Vol. 71, pp. 24-5

Segaon

11 December 1939

Whatever may be said to the contrary, I must continue to claim to be a friend and well-wisher of the Princes. For, my picture of free India has a definite place for them. And hence it is that I have been drawing attention to the weakness of their position as it exists today. The small princes would do well to abdicate the powers they should never have possessed, and the powers of the bigger ones should be regularized. I have also ventured to suggest the minimum required.

No one in his wildest imagination thinks that the people of the States will for ever remain what they are. They will fight for their rights either non-violently or violently. In any case, the Princes cannot hold out against millions who have become conscious of their power, whether spiritual or physical.

If the Princes will not read the signs of the times, has the Paramount Power, which has 'rescued' or 'created' them, no duty towards the people of the States? Shri Pyarelal has examined this question and endeavoured to show, as the reader will find elsewhere in this issue of *Harijan*, that no treaty obligations absolve the Paramount Power from protecting the people against misrule, or compel it to recognize the princes as co-equals with itself and free from all control. The very word 'Paramountcy' involves the final authority of the Paramount Power. The so-called treaties are not treaties between equals, but conditions and restrictions imposed upon those to whom they are given. There are so many grants made principally or wholly for the consolidation of Paramountcy. Lawyers will no doubt be found who would argue that treaties are solemn pledges which can be enforced by the princes. How can a dwarf enforce rights on a giant?

Those who accuse the Congress of bargaining with England when she is engaged in a life-and-death struggle, do not know what they are saying. Anyway I can have no part in bargaining. It is against my nature. India's birthright may not be recognized today. It will be when the time comes. But the issue must be plainly understood.

I hold that, in the nature of things, it is impossible for the Congress to negotiate with the Princes directly. When the time has come, it will be found that the Paramount Power will have negotiated on their behalf with the Congress or whoever can deliver the goods. Princes must not be used or allowed to impede the march of India to freedom, even as the ICS, a British creation, cannot be allowed to do so. Both are bulwarks of the Empire, and both will either be found to yield willing assistance to free India or will be disbanded. This is not said to offend them. It is the naked truth. When Britain has shed imperialism, at least so far as India is concerned, it will be discovered that these two arms of imperialism were no hindrance on England's path towards the right act.

As I visualize the war at this stage, I see that it has not yet commenced with grim earnestness. Both parties are discovering and inventing new methods of destruction, but both are, I hope, evading the terrible slaughter which must result from any serious impact between the two. Awful as the indiscriminate sinking of ships with the attendant loss of life is, it will be found to be insignificant compared to what will happen when the fight commences in right earnest. Meanwhile moral issues are being decided for the combatants, whether they will or not. I observe that British statesmen have now begun to confine the war aims to the freedom of European nations. Unless the war comes to an abrupt end, they will find it necessary to go back to the original aim of saving the world for democracy. This war with the gigantic preparations it has necessitated will force the parties to cover much wider moral ground than they have perhaps contemplated. The war may, therefore, ultimately be decided on moral issues. At any rate, the Congress, which has voluntarily disarmed itself and chosen the path of peace or non-violence, is engaged in bringing the moral issue to the forefront. And if it keeps patient, it may, by its sheer insistence on the moral issue, play an important part in preventing the impending holocaust. A clear perception of the problem of the Princes is a big part of the moral issue. I invite the Princes and their advisers and, last but not least, the British statesmen to examine it dispassionately and without the old bias.

GENERAL II: ALL INDIA STATES PEOPLE'S CONFERENCE

1. On the Ludhiana Conference: J.D. Penny¹ to Wilberforce-Bell², Resident for the Punjab States, 31 January 1939

File No. 6(3)-P(S) 1939, Praja Mandal Papers, Punjab State Archives

With reference to your confidential letter dated 16th January 1939 in which you suggest that the Punjab Government should prescribe under Section 5 of the Indian States (Protection) Act XI of 1934 the so called AISPC to be held³ in Ludhiana next month, I am desired to say that though it may be safely assumed that the conference is being held with the object of caused disaffection in the States, there is on the information available no reason to think that the proceedings will differ materially from the usual Riasat Praja Mandal meetings and State Conferences, which have been held in the province in the past. The presence of Jawaharlal Nehru may act as a 'draw', but it may also act as a moderating influence on the extremist State agitators. In any case it is improbable that much will be said or done which has not already been said or done previously. To prohibit the conference might only make matters worse by provoking a campaign directed more particularly against the Punjab States and the Punjab Government. So far as the Punjab Government is aware the Ludhiana Conference is to be of an all-India character and although it may be significant that the Punjab has been selected as its venue, there appears to be no good ground for believing that

any particular prominence will be given to the alleged grievances of subjects of the Punjab States rather than to those of States in other parts of India.

¹ James Downing Penny (b. 1886); educated at Marlborough College, Magdalen College, Oxford; Settlement Officer, Lyallpur, 1920; Secretary to Government of Punjab, Finance Department, 1927; Commissioner, 1934; Chief Secretary to Government of Punjab, 1947; Financial Commissioner, Punjab 1941.

² Lt. Col. H. Wilberforce-Bell (1885–1956); CIE, KCIE, ICS, joined Indian Political Service in 1909; Served as Deputy Political Secretary; Agent of the Governor-General in the Deccan States, 1930 and in the Punjab States, 1937–39.

³ The All India States People's Conference held its session on 15–16 February at Ludhiana. Jawaharlal Nehru presided over the session.

2. Ludhiana Conference

Sardar Karam Singh Dhoot's Welcome address at the AISPC at Ludhiana, *Tribune*, 15 February 1939

15 February 1939

We are meeting at a time which to all intents and purposes is the most opportune one. The people in other States are fighting against their Rulers for the attainment of responsible Government and civil liberties; the demand of the States people backed by the strong and organised mass force has perturbed even the Simla power, and we find today their open intervention in the States. On account of this a first-class All India crisis is looming large. At the same moment, for our general guidance and policy we have amidst us Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru who has times out of number made his frank utterances regarding the antique and feudal regimes of the Indian States. Our Conference, therefore, is bound to give a new lead to the struggle in the States.

It was but natural that the States Peoples were considered to be the most backward and unfortunate. Under the worst type of administration, sanctioned by no constitutional law, how can we poor people of the States ever progress? The teeming illiterate masses deprived of any educational institution, the poor poverty stricken hordes without enough to eat or to provide their children, are but perpetually exploited strata of the human society in the States.

In addition to this social degradation, there is no less stiffening in the States' administration and the rule. No liberty to speak in the meeting, whatever be the nature of the meeting. Permission to hold meetings of condolences and celebrate marriages is necessary. The very foundation by means of which people may organize and communicate their feelings is taken away; the very fundamental rights of human beings are not given to them. Again there are in some States, peasants who have to work with their families, women and children also on the small crumbs of land that never have given them enough to cater even to their bare necessities of the year. There are in this land of princes, the factories where no Factory Act protects the poor workers, boys and women from the 13 hour working days. There are also moneylenders who know no check on their acts of squeezing the famine stricken, deserted, sickly, helpless families of the peasantry.

The people of States no longer could continue to foster any hopes of getting reforms by any number of Round Table discussions through official committees set up at times by the State authorities.

The grim struggles in the States went on. Hyderabad, Kashmir, the premier States of the country, also struck a note for direct action. No political organisation was to be allowed, then why not call it communal and dub it under that name?

British Imperialism is passing through its hard days. In the International market it has lost its entire prestige and values. It is unnerved today by the mailed fist of the Fascist Dictatorships and

has become the bulwark of the reactionary forces of the world. Under the present conditions the British Imperialism has internationally become so weak that it cannot afford to invite any conflict in India.

The Indian National Congress today is the strongest political power in the country. Thousands and lakhs of people, workers and peasants are ready today to make any sacrifices, at the altar of the motherland if only the National Congress gave a command to that effect. The caution note struck by the *Times of India*, 'is it not possible to endeavour to resolve Mr Gandhi's doubts and differences by personal contacts?' only confirms the fact that the Indian National Congress is the supreme power in our country including its States and betrays the nervous feeling that the Imperialism must come to terms if it wants to save itself from the catastrophe of revolution.

But today Imperialism is on the offensive. It has organised its political department and arranged a centralised plan to deal with the situation arising out of the States' people's struggle in the various States. By crushing the movement long before it develops into any formidable and irresistible force to compel compromise and grant responsible Government and civil liberties, British Imperialism wants to clear the passage for Federation by nipping it in the bud.

True that Gandhiji and Sardar Patel have warned Ministers of Bombay and Orissa to be prepared for resignation as an alternative, if the Governor's and Paramount Powers' intervention is not withdrawn; the ministries have been further instructed not to execute the extradition warrants whatever be the pressure from the Governor. But again Gandhiji says, 'I once more appeal to His Excellency the Viceroy to study the question more deeply than he had done.'

The Indian National Congress should order their committees all over the country to organise and co-ordinate with the struggle of the States people everywhere. Batches of volunteers should be formed in British India under the instructions of the Congress Committees and should be raised in the State, to help the people's struggle without delay. Huge funds throughout the country should be collected for rendering help to the refugees of the States. On the ashes of Haripura non intervention, the edifice of direct intervention by the Congress Committees must be constructed. The ministries must refuse to apply the Princes' Protection Act and let the constitutional crisis be thus precipitated. The harmony thus created between the parliamentary attitude with the extra-parliamentary activity will then bear the real revolutionary significance, and then it can be said that the constitution is worked in order to wreck it. The real fight to counteract the Federation will now begin. Therefore, Comrades, be on your feet now.

3. Nehru Appeals for Funds

AISPC Papers, File No. 187, NMML

17 February 1939

The All India States People's Conference has just concluded its session at Ludhiana. This session met at a turning point in the struggle in the states where India is dominated by this problem and repercussions from it are likely to affect all our public activities. The National Congress is being increasingly drawn into it and the States People's Conference has wisely decided to work in the closest cooperation with the Congress and under its guidance. This Conference has a heavy burden to carry and it is resolved to shoulder this vital responsibility in a worthy manner and to carry on this work effectively and efficiently. For this purpose it requires and invites the full cooperation of all its constituent units and Praja Mandals as well as of all people in India who are interested in this problem. Efficient work requires a sufficiency of funds and it is calculated that a minimum of Rs 15000 will be required for the working of our headquarters' office and a research department.

The office will continue to be in Bombay but the research department is proposed to be established in Allahabad at an early date. I appeal on behalf of the Conference to all States' People's organisations and friends interested in the states, as well as the international movement for Indian freedom, to contribute to this fund. Donations and subscriptions should be sent to the Treasurer¹, All India States People's Conference 138 Medows Street, Fort, Bombay or to me to Swaraj Bhawan, Allahabad.

¹ Durlabhji Umedchand of Kathiawar was treasurer and member of the Standing Committee of the AISPC in 1939.

4. The Ludhiana Conference

Independent India, Vol. II, No. 8, 19 February 1939

19 February 1939

We welcome the decision of the Working Committee of the All India States People's Conference to convert itself into a Standing Committee¹ to coordinate the struggles of the States' People's under the Congress leadership and fast abandoning its discredited policy of non-intervention. It can be confidently expected that Tripuri² will open a new chapter in the relations between the Congress and States' People's struggles and that hence-forward the Congress will be actively and directly conducting all those struggles with the objective of an immediate establishment of responsible government in the States. Under the circumstances the decision of the States' People's Conference to place itself under the leadership of the Congress must be considered a wise and statesmanlike decision. The national struggle will henceforward proceed on all the fronts with equal vigour and determination under a unified leadership. Pandit Jawaharlal's address to the annual conference at Ludhiana is a spirited call for action. We endorse his analysis of the position of the States and his trenchant criticism of the new doctrine of independence of States sought to be evolved by the imperialist spokesmen. We, however, respectfully disagree with him when he says towards the conclusion of his address: 'The demand everywhere is for full responsible government. Yet the conflict is not at present to enforce that demand, but to establish the right of organising people for that demand'. He further says, 'the immediate issue today is thus one of civil liberties in most of the States, though the objective everywhere is responsible government'. We fail to understand this difference between the struggle for civil liberties and one for responsible government. Every student of politics knows that civil liberties can be guaranteed only by a responsible government. As long as there is no responsible government, any amount of freedom of press, speech or assembly that may be enjoyed by the subjects is enjoyed not as a matter of right but at the sweet will of the rulers, and as such always liable to be revoked as a result of the slightest change in that ever-changing will. The struggle of the States' People should, therefore, be waged not against this or that ban order but against the system of Government which makes such bans possible. In the initial struggles States may start as a protest against such arbitrary orders. But it is the task of the leadership to raise them to a higher level and coordinate them into a general struggle for the enforcement of the demand for responsible government. We hope and trust that the impending struggles of the States' People will not be restricted within the narrow limits of a struggle for mere civil liberties.

¹ For the full text of this resolution passed at the sixth session of AISPC, at Ludhiana on 15-17 February, 1939, see File No. 187, AISPC Papers.

² The 52nd session of the Indian National Congress was held at Tripuri from 10-12 March 1939.

5. On the Ludhiana Conference: Henry Craik,
Governor of Punjab, to Linlithgow, the Viceroy, 26 February 1939

Extracts from the letter dated 26 February 1939, File No. 6(3)-P(S), 1939, Punjab State Archives

The All India States People's Conference was held at Ludhiana from the 15th to 17th February and you have doubtless seen reports of the proceedings. I had informed you that as a result of discussion between Sikander and myself it had been decided not to proscribe this Conference although the Resident required us to do so. I think the events justified our decision. As was anticipated, nothing new was said or done at the Conference and no definite line of action was decided upon. The resolutions passed were for the most part, vague and couched in general terms. One or two obscure speakers endeavoured to give prominence to alleged grievances of the subjects of the Punjab States, but Nehru cut them short and emphasised that the Conference was not concerned with the Punjab States in particular but with the problems of Indian States in general. His speech was long, academic and somewhat dull. Altogether the Conference seems to have fallen rather flat, Jawaharlal's presence acted as a draw and perhaps as many as 12,000 people attended the first sitting, but the numbers tended to dwindle both owing to the inclemency of the weather and to the fact that proceedings were in English and most of the speakers from outside the Punjab could not speak Urdu well....

6. Agenda for AISPC meeting:
Shankar Lal¹ to Jawaharlal Nehru, 7 June 1939

AISPC Papers, Correspondence, File No. 178, NMML.

New Delhi
7 June 1939

Dear Panditji,

You have convened a meeting of the Standing Committee of the All India States People's Conference for the 17th. So far we were waiting that Mahatma Gandhi will do something for the States. Now he has announced² an indefinite postponement of the mass movement and suggested negotiations with the State authorities. Immediately after the issue of Mahatmaji's statement, the attitude of the State authorities has stiffened and many of them have launched a repressive policy in their States. So far, the Congress was not meddling in the States affairs and the All India States People's Conference was the only body to look after the welfare of the States' people.

Now after Mahatmaji's statement, the Standing Committee must consider the future and fate of these twelve crores of people. To a man of your knowledge and experience, there is no necessity of telling anything, but to give only one example; in the Bharatpur State, seventy five per cent of the people are literally living on the leaves and beans of trees.

I don't want to propose any resolution in the Standing Committee, but only want to make a few suggestions to yourself. If you agree, you may please put them before the meeting and in the case you don't, the matter ends there.

My suggestions are as follows:

1. Seth Jamnalal Bajaj is imprisoned in Jaipur for defying an order of the Magistrate, i.e. his entry into Jaipur State against peace and order. Now we know that it is physically impossible for poor Seth Jamnalalji to disturb the law and order of any State. On the other side, these Princes and their Ministers coming in the British territory, kidnap young girls, murder people, take loans and goods worth lacs of rupees from merchants and never pay them, and commit all sorts of crimes. If

Seth Jamnalalji's entry can be prohibited, why these Congress Ministers not prohibit the entry of these Princes and their Ministers in British territory.

When Mahatmaji took a fast on Rajkot affair, Pt Shukla,¹ the Premier of CP, said in a statement: 'We Ministers will court arrest and as any person can be appointed a Minister for six months, without his being member of the Legislature, the whole of CP will court arrest on the same issue as Ministers'. So in case the Congress Ministers can co-operate with us, let the Ministers issue an embargo against the entry of the Princes or their Ministers into British territory and if necessary court arrest, although in my opinion, issuing of such order is not against the India Act of 1935. If necessary, the order may be issued only against the employees of State.

2. My second suggestion is: declare a complete economic boycott against any particular selected State. No goods should go into the State from the British territory and no goods should come out of it.

I may clarify my position by giving an example. Supposing economic boycott is launched against Kashmir. Kashmir's exports are fruits, timber, woollen and silk goods etc., and its imports are cotton goods, salt, oil etc. If its goods are not allowed to enter the British territory, it will succumb in no time. This example can be applied to so many of the Rajputana and other States.

So to sum up, my suggestions are complete economic boycott against a particular selected state and prohibiting the entry of State officials into British territory. I have discussed these two points with many friends and all of them agree. In case you agree, well and good, otherwise I think you must be considering the whole situation deeply and will place some programme before the Standing Committee.

¹ Lala Shankar Lal (1885-1940), matriculated from DAV School, Patiala and graduated from DAV College, Lahore in 1908; involved in Patiala Sedition case in 1909, General Secretary, Home Rule League in 1917; President, Delhi Pradesh Congress Committee 1937; General Secretary, All India Forward Bloc, 1939; Member, Standing Committee of AISPC, 1939.

² See *CWMG*, Vol. 69, pp. 322-25.

³ Ravi Shankar Shukla (b. 1877); education. Bishop College, Nagpur; Law College, Jabbalpur; Headmaster, State High School, Khairagarh; Tutor to chiefs of Bastar, Kawardha and Khairagarh; joined Bar, 1908; imprisoned in 1923 and 1930, Minister for Development, 1937; Prime Minister, CP, 1939; arrested during the Quit India movement and served as Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh for a number of years.

7. Revised Constitution of AISPC

Free Press Journal, 28 June 1939

Bombay
28 June 1939

Article I: The object of the All India States People's Conference is the attainment by peaceful and legitimate means of full responsible Government by the people of the States as integral parts of a free and federal India.

Article II: The All India States People's Conference shall comprise States' Committees, Recognised Committee, Provincial Committees, General Council, Annual Conference and Standing Committee.

Article III: No person shall be entitled to be on the constituent committees of the Conference if he or she is a member of any communal or other organisation, the object and programme of which involve political activities which are in the opinion of the Standing Committee in conflict with those of the Conference.

Article IV: For the purpose of the Conference, the States are divided into the following groups to be called the provinces of the Conference: Mysore and Karnatak States, Kerala and Madras States, Orissa and Eastern States (including Bhutan), Punjab and Frontier States (including Baluchistan), Punjab Hill States (including Tehri Garhwal), Kashmir and Jammu, Rajputana States (including Khairpur), Central India States (including Benares and Rampur), Gujarat States, Kathiawar States, Deccan States and Hyderabad.

Article V: States Committees are Praja Mandals or States People's Associations in individual States or groups of States or such bodies working for individual States or group of States from outside as are affiliated to the All India States People's Conference under this constitution.

Article VI: It shall be competent for the Standing Committee to recognise Praja Mandals or States People's Association inside the States or outside which are working for the people of the States on the lines of the Conference which are willing to work in cooperation with it. Notwithstanding the fact that they are not affiliated the recognised bodies shall be entitled to representation on the Conference and its constituent committees under the rules framed by the Standing Committee on this behalf.

Article VII: Any States People's organisation may be affiliated to the AISP. Conference through the Standing Committee of the Conference provided it:

- (a) encloses with its application a resolution passed by either its general body or the executive accepting the creed of the AISP. Conference and expressing its willingness to work under the general supervision and guidance of the AISPC.
- (b) agrees to send Rs 50 or 10 per cent of the membership fees, whichever is less as annual affiliation fee, and
- (c) has a minimum of 100 primary members on its roll.

It shall be open to the Standing Committee of the AISPC to disaffiliate any such affiliated institution provided that due notice containing charges against the said association of not less than three months be given to such body of such intention to show cause why it should not be disaffiliated, and the explanation, if any, furnished by the body concerned has been duly considered at a meeting of the Standing Committee of the AISPC after giving specific notice of the subject and circulating the explanation beforehand.

Article VIII:

- (a) The Provincial Committee in each province shall consist of the representatives of the constituent and recognised organisations in that province in addition to the representatives, the president and ex-presidents of the Provincial and the AISP Conference.
- (b) Every provincial committee shall, subject to the general control and supervision of the Standing Committee, be in charge of the affairs of that province.
- (c) The Provincial Committee will be competent to frame their own rules in conformity with the spirit of this constitution. They will come into force after the approval of the Standing Committee of the Conference.
- (d) On failure on the part of any provincial committee to function in terms of the constitution the Standing Committee may form one to carry on the work of the Conference in that province.

Article IX:

- (a) Every State's Committee will be entitled to elect one delegate for the session of the Conference for one lac of the population of the State or States concerned, provided the said committee had 100 primary members on its roll for each such seat allotted to it.

- (b) The delegates of a province will constitute the Provincial Committee. This Committee will be entitled to co-opt up to one third of its members with a view to provide representation to the States or interests within the province otherwise remaining unrepresented.

Article X:

- (a) Every Provincial Committee will be entitled to elect seven members to the General Council of the Conference. The Council so constituted will be entitled to co-opt upto one third of its members with a view to give representation to the provinces or interests otherwise remaining unrepresented.
- (b) Members of the General Council shall pay one rupee as fee to the Central Office before they are entitled to exercise their votes.
- (c) The General Council shall carry out the programme of work laid down by the Conference from session to session and deal with any new affairs arising during its term of office.
- (d) 30 or 1/5th of its member whichever is less shall be the quorum of the General Council.

Article XI:

- (a) The Standing Committee will consist of 21 members including the president. Each Provincial Committee will elect one member to this Committee. The President of the Conference will nominate eight additional members to this committee from the members of the General Council. If any seat allotted for the Provinces remains vacant for any reason, the President of the Conference will be entitled to nominate a member of the General Council belonging to the Province concerned to the said seat, provided that the ex-presidents of the AISPC shall on their signing the creed be additional members of the Committee.
- (b) The Standing Committee shall be the sole executive authority of the Conference and shall have power to carry into effect the policy and programme laid down by the AISPC.
- (c) Seven will be the quorum of the Standing Committee.
- (d) The Standing Committee shall have power to frame rules and issue instructions for the proper working of the constitution and to meet emergencies otherwise provided for: to take such disciplinary action as it may deem fit against a Committee or individual for misconduct.
- (e) The Standing Committee shall take steps to have regular neglect or default, and to superintend, direct and control all constituent committees.

Audit of the accounts of the affiliated organisations.

Article XII:

- (a) The President of the Conference will continue to function till next session. He will also be the chairman of the General Council and the Standing Committee of the Conference.
- (b) The President will nominate two General Secretaries and the Treasurer from amongst the members of the Standing Committee.
- (c) The General Secretaries of the Conference will also be the Secretaries of the General Council and the Standing Committee.
- (d) The Treasurer shall be in charge of the funds of the Conference and shall maintain proper accounts for the same.

Article XIII:

- (a) The Standing Committee will invite suggestions for the choice of the President from the Provincial Committees.

- (b) It will elect the President from this suggested list at least one month before the sessions of the Conference.

Article XIV:

- (a) The annual conference shall be held at the place and time decided upon by the Committee.
- (b) The reception Committee shall be in charge of the necessary arrangements for the conference including the collection of funds, accommodation of delegates etc. and will generally work under the guidance of the Standing Committee of the Conference.
- (c) The General Council of the Conference shall meet as the subjects committee of the Conference before its sessions under the chairmanship of the President-elect.

8. Ludhiana Report by R. Kapadia¹, General Secretary AISPC

AISPC Papers, File No. 187, NMML

n.d.

In introducing this report to the public it is necessary that a brief connected account of the progress of events upto date should be incorporated in the foreword. When we met in Karachi, it must be admitted that there was an air of unreality about the proceedings, not that the grievances were not genuine, nor that the representatives were not duly accredited, nor even that the resolutions were not serious, but that the Conference met without a background of general awakening—without adequate proofs of earnestness of purpose or readiness for sacrifice on any very large scale, amongst the people of the States themselves. The cities of Bombay, Karachi and Calcutta are largely peopled by emigrants from States who have large business interests in these centers and who keep up their contact with their homeland. Their desire for freedom in the States was no less keen than for their longing complete Independence in the Provinces, but they were mostly arm-chair politicians who would attend meetings, finance movements, and earn that way a sense of satisfaction at duty conscientiously done by their motherland. Indeed these were exactly the accusations made from the Congress platform by responsible leaders in answer to the charge that Congress was not taking adequate interest in the States.

It was under such circumstances that the Karachi Session met in July 1936. Dr Pattabhi Sitaramayya was asked to preside. He felt it was a call of duty and a position of responsibility in the matter of keeping the caravan together and marching it on to its goal intact. He readily answered to this call of duty. The problem was really approached in this spirit. The pioneer work in this behalf had already been done by friends whose names are no longer in the limelight, being absorbed in the chronicles of the past which posterity does not always keep fresh in its memory. They are like the stones embedded in the foundations of an edifice which have contributed to its strength and durability but which are content to remain for ever in obscurity in the bosom of the earth. It is the facades that attract public gaze, and charm the public eye. And when it is said that there was a certain unreality in the conditions surrounding the Karachi session, the statement must be understood, subject to the high obligations we owe to the memory of the great services rendered in the past by those who were called to preside over the different sessions, and by that much larger number of captains and lieutenants who gave their services, yes, their lives to the cause they had held nearer to their hearts. It is easy for us to cavil at the methods adopted by our forebears, but it is wrong to judge earlier events by later developments or standards.

The States People's movement could only keep pace with the times. In the earlier years, therefore, it adopted the traditional and time honoured methods of petition and protest and like the Indian National Congress itself in the first three decades of its career, the States People's

organisation put its trust in publicity, its hope in argument and its faith in the British. And what better exponents of its cause could it secure than Sjt Abhyankar², himself a State subject, who had a whole life's record to his credit for the service of his fellow-men, than Sir Moecherte Ramchandra Rao, a sedate and sound politician than whom we could get no better exponent of a cause or no sounder advocate of a demand; than again Sjt C.Y. Chintamani¹ who stands unrivalled today in his knowledge of affairs and his powers of exposition, as in the authority which he can claim on the subjects he deals with and the soundness of the views he holds in his own school of thought; than finally Shri Ramananda Chatterjee, 'that patriarch of India whose sense of nationalism revolted against the 'pure atmosphere of study' thirty years ago and whose spirit of independence is an asset and example to his generation alike of workers and leaders? To pass on from this distinguished gallery of public men to an eminent Congressman whose name is a name to conjure with in India today, a versatile genius, a gallant exponent of the cause of the suppressed and oppressed, a man who has served a life-time the poor and the down-trodden, Dr Pattabhi Sitaramayya, who was for the first time chosen to preside over the session at Karachi was a step in the self-discovery of a National movement tending to the Congress side, and yet keeping itself apart. But the Karachi session helped to establish the long-needed and much desired contact between the two bodies. Dr Pattabhi's yeoman's services to the cause of the states' people by his close study of their problem, by a vigilant watch of the day-to-day benefits in the states, by his wide publicity and wearisome tours in various states must be mentioned here with a sense of deep gratefulness.

Upto Karachi, the constitution of the Conference was somewhat loose—a feature which continues today. But at Karachi the States were grouped under nine States Provinces, and the task of organisation was seriously taken on hand. The Province of Deccan, Travancore, Cochin and Mysore, the Orissa States Province and Kathiawar had all held their respective provincial conferences, but not all of them affiliated themselves to the AISP Conference. Even today there are provinces which have chosen to work independently of this organisation.

Besides holding these Conferences for purpose of carrying on propaganda and publicity, the President undertook a number of tours which have covered about forty States altogether, including amongst others Bhavnagar, Rajkot, Limbdi Porbundar, Jamnagar, Dharanagadra in Kathiawar, Baroda in Gujarat, and in the Deccan States, Bhor, Aundh, Kolhapur, Miraj, Jamkhandi, Sawantwadi, Sangli and so on. It is gratifying to note that there is a general mass awakening amongst the people—circumstances which have helped them to secure the sympathy and support of the Congress. The passing of the Government of India Act and the wholly unworthy treatment accorded to the people of the States have added insult to the sense of injury already at work amongst the States' People on account of their deep-rooted, widespread and long-standing grievances, on the one hand, on the other, the suffering caused by various acts of repression and oppression by the Rulers themselves. Although this Conference usually meets once in two years, yet the pressure for pooling our experiences and concentrating public opinion on the burning question of the day made a convention of workers indispensable and urgent and it was thus that the Navsari Convention met at Navsari on the eve of the Haripura Session of the Indian National Congress. Close contact was established as the result of the convention between the All India States People's Conference and the great national body and the policy laid down at Haripura has been justified by the course of events during the past ten months. The people of the States have been put on their mettle and have had adequate proofs of the sympathy and support of the Congress in respect of movements of direct action undertaken by them on their own initiative in order to solve their many and complex problems. The first of these movements was in Rajkot, which under the unerring leadership of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel met with early success and remains not merely a notable event but a real phenomenon in the annals of the States' People's struggle in

India. How a settlement was reached in Rajkot, how it has been gone back upon, and how a renewed struggle has become inevitable are now facts of history which serve as beacon light to the sister states of India in their voyage on the turbulent waters of Indian nationalism.

It was under these circumstances that the Ludhiana session has been held.

One important resolution passed by the Ludhiana Conference is to deal with the question of Treaties and the number of States that can fitly form component factors of a Federal Scheme. No state with less than half a crore of annual revenue can possibly feel equal to the responsibilities of a state or Province in a Federation. And the century old Treaties contracted by a trading company with the rulers of the time engaged in inter-necine warfare cannot be considered binding upon posterity—particularly at a time when the Treaty of Versailles has been revised at Munich in the space of sixteen years. The necessity to scrap these treaties which after all are only forty in number out of 562 States has been admitted on all hands in highly responsible quarters and the time has come when the subject can no longer be considered as theoretical. At Ludhiana its discussion naturally occupied an important place and that is why we say the last session marked the end of the second and the beginning of the third stage in the development of the movement of liberty of the States' people.

In this third stage then Ludhiana has brought the problem of the States much nearer to the Congress than hitherto. It used to be the complaint of the States' People that the Congress has not taken sufficient interest. But since Haripura this old standing complaint has been wholly obviated and the two trains hitherto coursing along different lines are approximating to a point of convergence at the Tripura junction through the level crossing at Ludhiana. Critics have objected to the meddlesomeness and the mess the Congress is tending to be guilty of in Indian politics in thus tending to coalesce the two movements. This is not a new development, it is the logical and inevitable conclusion of the concept of a Federal India which was inaugurated since Sir John Simon adumbrated it in 1928 and which has been discussed as the final consummation of Indian policy since the Home Rule days of 1914. You cannot ask the States and the Provinces to come together under one scheme of political union on terms of inequality, for such an alliance of autocratic states and Democratic provinces cannot but end in disaster. India wants to move on in a single Caravan as a nation which is one and indivisible. The Congress as well as the States' People's Conference know that a Federation of the Province is as unthinkable as the unequal yoking of the two. Both of them know equally that the march of the two together is likely to retard the pace and the speed but the momentum that is developed by the combined mass of the two at a low velocity is bound to be greater than that of either at a faster rate. India cannot accept the position of a paralytic with one side whole and the other side diseased and disabled. Hence it is that Ludhiana has decided though not in so many words to change the form of the States' People's Conference, yet to entrust the affairs of the body to a Standing Committee which should work in close collaboration with, and under the direct guidance of the Congress or any sub-committee of the Congress Working Committee. Ludhiana was fortunate enough to secure the services and distinct leadership of one who is not only the idol of his people but is also one who has advocated a life time to the cause of the suppressed—Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Panditji's election to the Presidentship after Conference was in itself a great achievement and guaranteed an unprecedented success for the Session, which it ultimately gained. Under his leadership and guidance, the Conference promises a good, profitable turn over and attain to liberty from the crushing yoke of a system of medieval Feudalism.

¹ Rangildas Kapadia, member of the Standing Committee of the AISPC and its General Secretary in 1939.

² Abhyankar, Moreswar Vasudeo (1886–1935); Born in Dhanodi village of Wardha district into an affluent Malgurar family, he was educated in Nagpur. Studying law in England, he returned as barrister to India in 1909 and started practicing in Nagpur. He took interest in politics; regarded Lokamanya Tilak as Guru and toured with him during his Home Rule movement. He opposed Gandhiji's resolution in the Amritsar Congress regarding acceptance of Reforms of 1919. After the Gaya session of 1922, he joined the Swarajists; took active part in the Simon Commission protest and Civil Disobedience movements. In between, he joined the Hindu Mahasabha in 1922 but left it in 1927. He championed the causes of women and depressed classes and was also the president of Harijan Seva Mandal.

³ C.Y. Chitamani; Sir Chirravoor Yajneswara Chintamani was born in Visakhapatnam (Andhra Pradesh) in 1880. He entered journalism at the age of 18, and chose the United Provinces and Bihar as the scene of his activities; became editor at the age of 29. His name is closely associated with *The Leader* (English daily) published from Allahabad. He also edited *The Indian People*, apart from journalism, he graduated to politics, becoming one of the leaders of the Liberal Party. He was a member of the UP Legislative Council, 1916–23; and again 1927–36; General Secretary of National Liberal Federation of India in 1919, and in the First Round Table Conference. He was also Minister of Education and Industries of the United Provinces government from 1921–23. He returned as editor in 1926, and continued till his death in 1941. His publications included *Indian Politics since the Mutiny* (1937), and *Speeches and Writings of Sir Pherozeshah Mehta* (ed.). He received honorary doctorates from Banaras Hindu University and Allahabad University.

⁴ Ramananda Chatterjee (b. 1865); education: Bankura Zilla School, Graduated from St. Xavier's College, Bombay; Founded and edited 'Pradip'; appointed Principal, Kayasthar College, 1895, Allahabad; Started *Modern Review*, 1907; Vice-President, Hindu Mahasabha; Chairman, Reception Committee, AISPC, 1930.

9. States People's Conference

Jai Narain Vyas Papers, File No. 10, NMML

Wardha

11 October 1939

At their meeting held on October 11, 1939, the Standing Committee of the All India States People's Conference considered the war crisis and its effect on the Indian States. They pointed out the incongruity of the Rulers expressing their support of the principle of democracy in Europe while maintaining undiluted autocracy in their States. The Committee were unable to accept the commitments of the Rulers of the resources of their States for the War, and condemned the introduction of new and stringent repressive measures on the plea of the war. The Committee invited the various Rulers to declare their acceptance of the objective of full responsible government in their States and to undertake to give effect to it, in the largest possible measure, in the immediate future.

This invitation met with no response, while repression had grown in the States and the Rulers had affirmed afresh their determination to maintain autocracy. This position of the States had been used by the British Government and the Rulers as a barrier against the advancement of Indian freedom as a whole.

The Standing Committee, speaking on behalf of the peoples of the States, repudiated this assertion and expressed its strong objection to the practice of considering the autocratic Ruler as if he represented the State. The people of the States suffered more from the lack of freedom than those in the rest of India; their need of freedom was therefore all the greater. They had stood for the independence of India as a whole and for full responsible government within the States, and in the realisation of these objectives they were at one with the rest of India.

The Standing Committee wished to declare, on behalf of the peoples of the States, that they entirely repudiated the whole background of the theory and argument by which the Rulers had attempted to defend their own autocracy and to separate themselves from India's progress. The people of the States were no parties to the old Treaties and they did not consider themselves bound by them, nor they recognised any new treaty or arrangement which limited their rights or came in the way of their own or Indian freedom. Their objective was full responsible government

in the States within the framework of an independent united India, and everything that militated against this objective had to be rejected. Thus no constitution or agreement or convention which made progress dependent on the will of the Ruler could be acceptable. The essential conditions that were to be observed were that the will of the people of the States was to prevail in constitutional and other matters, that civil liberty was to be maintained, and the rule of law be established. These conditions were completely lacking in the States and a state of affairs prevailed there which was an outrage to civilized humanity and all decent life.

The Committee had every wish to help in a peaceful settlement of the problem of the States and, in any future arrangement, to maintain the dignity of the Ruler as a constitutional head. But the Committee could not agree to autocracy in any shape or form, or to the will of the people of the State being overruled by the Ruler.

The larger States could remain as free democratic units in a national federation, but as was pointed out in the Ludhiana resolution, such States as had not got a population exceeding twenty lakhs or a revenue exceeding fifty lakhs, could not maintain the necessary standard of administration, and were therefore to be amalgamated with the neighbouring provinces.

While the Standing Committee was convinced that such amalgamation of the smaller uneconomic States was necessary, they viewed with concern the attempts being made to transfer certain minor states and estates to either parent, contiguous or tribute states without any reference to the wishes of the people concerned. The suggested conditions of such transfer were such as to perpetuate existing evils and to add to them. As a general rule no State area could be enlarged and amalgamation of the smaller States could take place with the neighbouring provinces, and, in any event, the wishes of the people concerned could be the deciding factor.

The Standing Committee, having followed the course of the War in Europe and the British policy in regard to it and to India, were of opinion that the war was being carried on either side for imperialist ends. With such a war, they could not associate themselves or render any help. They dissociated themselves entirely from the personal declarations of the rulers in regard to the War and the steps taken in furtherance thereof. The objectives and interests of the peoples of the States being in line with those of the people in the rest of India, they associated themselves completely with the National policy in regard to the War and the future of India....

GENERAL III: STATES AND FEDERATIONS

1. Patiala State and Federation: Linlithgow to Yadavindra Singh,¹ 27 January 1939

Prime Minister's Office, Patiala State Records, File No. 10334, Chamber of Princes Records,
NAI (Bhopal)

*Viceroy's Camp
India
27 January 1939*

My dear Maharaja Sahib,

I am writing to Your Highness on the question of the accession of your State to the Federation provided for in the Government of India Act, 1935.

A considerable interval has elapsed since the discussions held in the winter of 1936-37 between Representatives of States and my Special Representatives and the receipt thereafter of communications from States as to the terms to which they would wish their accession to be subject

should they subsequently decide to accede to the Federation. This interval has been occupied by an exhaustive study of the points which emerged from those discussions and of the desires expressed by States. The subjects brought forward were numerous and diverse and the issues involved in many cases of great importance and complexity, calling for careful consideration. It was enviable therefore that a considerable period should have been occupied by this examination, conducted in India by myself as Crown Representative in close and confidential consultation with the Government of India and in England by His Majesty's Government.

As the result of this study I am now in a position to indicate the terms which His Majesty's Government would think it necessary that an Instrument of Accession executed by Your Highness should contain, in order to fulfil the requirements subject to which it would be submitted for His Majesty's acceptance. It is necessary for me to emphasise that the terms now indicated must be regarded in all essentials as incapable of further relaxation since they represent the further point to which, after the fullest consideration of all the issues involved, among which, the securing of the welfare and interests of the States was prominently in their mind, His Majesty's Government have found it possible to go to meet the wishes or apprehensions expressed by States. Accession to any substantially less degree could not, in the opinion of His Majesty's Government, be sufficient qualification to entitle a State to become a unit, and enjoy the benefits of membership, of the Federation contemplated by the Act.

The terms in question and the position in regard to matters relevant thereto are indicated and where necessary explained in the enclosed documents:-

- (1) the draft of the general clauses of the Instrument of Accession;
- (2) the draft of the three Schedules to the Instrument of Accession;
- (3) the draft Acceptance by His Majesty;
- (4) two draft paragraphs for the Instrument of Instructions to the Governor General, one to replace paragraph XV of the draft Instructions presented to Parliament by the Secretary of State for India in February 1935, and the other an additional paragraph;
- (5) the draft Instrument of Instructions to the Crown Representative;
- (6) the draft Order in Council contemplated by Section 138(3) of the Act;
- (7) a note regarding amendments to the Act;
- (8) a note regarding the administration of Federal laws in Federated States [this must be read with the Third Schedule mentioned in (2) above]; and
- (9) a note regarding States' rights.

I fully appreciate that Your Highness will wish for time to study these terms and to consider their implications, and I have no desire to ask you to arrive at a decision in this important matter without full opportunity for the reflection which it deserves. In the circumstances I am now asking Your Highness to inform me at any time within the next six months whether you would be prepared to execute an Instrument of Accession on behalf of your State within the terms indicated in documents (1) and (2) mentioned in the preceding paragraph. The term 'within' has been designedly used since there are various matters in which an option has been given; moreover although His Majesty's Government might well be prepared when the time comes to recommend that a State should be admitted to the Federation if its accession is confined to the matters now shown as obligatory, and if it avails itself of all the limitations now indicated as admissible (whether or not that State has itself asked, in its earlier communications, for any particular limitation) it may yet be the case that States may wish to accede more fully in respect of the various legislative entries or to dispense with some or all of the limitations specified. I should make it clear that Your Highness is not being asked to draw up and execute an Instrument of Accession at this stage. Further action in

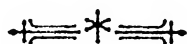
this respect will be taken only after the receipt of Your Highness' reply. But to facilitate the drawing up of the Instrument in the event of Your Highness expressing your willingness to accede to the Federation within the terms offered, I would request that the following matters may be borne in mind in framing your reply, should you decide to accede:

- (a) In regard to the general clauses of the Instrument of Accession it will be necessary to specify whether the inclusion of clause 4A is desired and, if so, to make the selection dealt with in the note regarding the administration of federal laws [document (8) in the preceding paragraph]. It will also be necessary to specify whether the inclusion of clause 4B is desired. As regards clause 4C a further communication will be made hereafter to any State in which there is an area in respect of which a declaration under Section 294(1) is to be made, and this clause will not find a place in the Instrument of any State to which no such communication is made.
- (b) In regard to the First Schedule it is necessary to specify the wishes of the State on the matters in respect of which this necessity is indicated in the notes against them. In the event, further, of Your Highness desiring to accede more fully in any respect or not to take advantage of any of the limitations set out, the desire should be precisely stated.
- (c) In the event of Your Highness wishing to enter into the separate agreement relating to the jurisdiction of the Federal Court mentioned in paragraph 5 to the note on States' rights [document (9) in the preceding paragraph], it will be necessary to state this and to specify the documents to be scheduled.

In conclusion I must again emphasise that there is no prospect of any substantial variation of the terms now indicated in the direction of allowing a less measure of accession than what is shown therein or of modifying or adding to the limitations specified. Should Your Highness however desire to satisfy yourself as to the reasons for any particular suggestions of your State not having been accepted, or having been accepted in a modified form, or for any changes made in the draft of the Instrument of Accession which was furnished to States by the Government of India in 1936, my local Political Representative will be happy to have a discussion with Your Highness or your officers at some convenient time and to explain then any such points on which information may be sought.

I would request Your Highness to be good enough to issue instructions to the effect that the contents of this letter and the accompanying documents for the present be treated as strictly confidential.

¹ Yadavindra Singh, b. 1913; educated at Aitchison College, Lahore; succeeded to the throne in 1938; received police training at the Police Training College, Phillaur; member, Standing Committee of Chamber of Princes.



2. Administrative Reforms in Indian States: Correspondence regarding Internal Reforms and Beneficial Activities in the States

Chamber of Princes Records, 'Ijlas-I-khas (Chamber of Princes)', File No. V(d) 360, 1939
(Basta No. 73), Rajasthan State Archives

*Council House
New Delhi
11 February 1939*

Your Highness,

The question of administrative reforms, suitable to local conditions, has been receiving the attention of many States and the examination of the various aspects of this question has been referred, or is proposed to be referred, to special committees or officers in certain States. It is obvious that this is a matter entirely within the internal autonomy of the States and the discretion of the Rulers concerned, but it raises several intricate questions—such as the system of administration suited to the different categories of States having regard to their financial and other limitations, the composition of any assemblies, panchayat boards or local bodies as well as their functions and restrictions on their powers, the classification of electorates on functional or territorial lines and the basis of franchise, the due protection of the legitimate rights of the various classes and interests in the States and the safeguarding of the special treaty rights and other matters—in which available information regarding the experience of, and the examination by, the States similarly circumstanced should be of special interest to the States concerned, without in any way affecting the ultimate discretion of the Rulers concerned. Moreover, Your Highness will appreciate that any hasty or ill-considered decision on such vital issues, taken by individual States without taking into consideration the relevant material and advice available from the experience of other similar States, might lead to undue precipitate action or unjustified hesitancy which may seriously react on the well-being of the individual States as well as of the other States.

As such, without intending in any manner to interfere with the discretion of the Rulers or the autonomy of the States in this matter or attempting to accelerate or retard the pace of developments suited to the peculiar conditions of each State, it is proposed, experimentally in the first instance, that the advice on such matters of the Standing Committee of Ministers—which includes representatives with experience of administrations of the bigger as well as of the smaller States—should not be denied to such States as may so desire. It is understood that the Standing Committee of Ministers could avail of the existing information and where necessary seek further information from other States similarly circumstanced which may have dealt with the problems suggested by any individual State. Similarly, expert advice could be taken, on matters requiring such advice, from outside the Standing Committee of Ministers. Moreover, any State so desiring could depute one of its Ministers or Secretaries to be present when the point referred by it are being examined by the Standing Committee of Ministers.

It is understood that all such references from the States would be treated as strictly confidential and will not bind the Rulers concerned to any particular course of action, nor would the proposed arrangement in any way interfere with mutual consultations between the provincial group of States on such matters which have with advantage been taken in various regional groups, or with the right of the Rulers to invite the views of any body or bodies of their subjects or of such advisers as they may desire.

It is hoped that this arrangement will prove of constructive service to the States and will assist in a farsighted and sympathetic solution, based on available precedents, of the important questions which may arrive in this connection.

Trusting this finds Your Highness in the enjoyment of excellent health.

Yours sincerely,
DIGVIJAYSINGHI
Maharaja Jam Sahib of Nawanagar
Chancellor, Chamber of Princes

3. Internal Reforms in the States

Prime Minister's Office, Patiala State Records, File No. 10334, Chamber of Princes Records, NAI (Bhopal)

*Council House,
New Delhi
19 April 1939*

Re: Administrative Reforms in Indian States.

Yours Highness,

In the course of his Opening Address at the recent Session¹ of the Chamber of Princes, His Excellency the Crown Representative made certain important observations on the question of internal reforms in the States which deserve our most careful consideration. These observations and the Princes' reply to the Address, emphasise the fundamental difference between constitutional and administrative reforms in the States and the different bases of dealing with them.

Your Highness has doubtless perused the full version of His Excellency's address which has been widely published. I am nevertheless taking the liberty of quoting below some of the more important extracts from the address, which have direct bearing on the question of Internal Reforms in the States, with a view to facilitate necessary action wherever needed:

- (i) 'I am not ignorant that in recent times the Rulers of Indian States have been passing through, in many cases, a period of stress and difficulty. Far be it from me to deny, that there have been many cases in which States have been subjected to attacks which were entirely unjustified.'
- (ii) '... It is more than ever essential in present conditions and in this changing world in which we live that the authorities of the Indian States should without exception make it their constant care to watch for and to remedy any legitimate grievances that may exist in the administrative field.'
- (iii) '... It is their (Rulers') plain and manifest duty, to ensure by their own close personal interest' ... that their 'subjects have cause for content, that they are not allowed to suffer undue exactions either on behalf of the State itself or at the call of unworthy officials, and that all genuine grievances receive prompt and active consideration.'
- (iv) 'It goes without saying that an effective machinery by which the authorities of the States can satisfy themselves that all such complaints can readily reach the ears of the Durbar is an essential necessity in present conditions;....'
- (v) 'There are many States which publish admirable Administration Reports, setting out in detail the true condition of affairs in the State, for all to see. Those States in which this

practice has not yet been adopted would I suggest, do well to consider the advisability of following the example of their neighbours in this matter.'

- (vi) '... I may repeat, that the decision as to the constitution best suited to the needs of his people and his State rests with the Ruler himself to take, and that no pressure will be brought to bear on him in this respect by the Paramount Power. Nor will any obstruction be placed in his way by the Paramount Power should he wish to give effect to constitutional advances consistent with his Treaty obligations. The actual form of such constitutional machinery as a Ruler may in these circumstances decide to establish in his State must I readily recognise, very according to conditions;'. . . .
- (vii) '... Your Highness will, I am quite certain, agree with me that the more personal the form of rule, the greater is the need for personal touch. He who would be the father of his people must satisfy himself that all classes of his subjects are given their fair share in the benefits of his rule, and that an undue proportion of the revenue of his State is not reserved for his own expenditure.'
- (viii) '... An absentee Ruler, like an absentee landlord, represents a condition of affairs that has never easily admitted of justification;'. . . .
- (ix) '... The Paramount Power stands ready to support the Princes in the fulfilment of its treaty obligations.'
- (x) '... It is not possible that the more farsighted Princes should combine to point out to such a Ruler by means of friendly advice the error of his ways, so that discredit may not be brought upon the entire Princely Order?'
- (xi) 'In no case is the need for cooperation and combination more patent, more pronounced, and more immediate than in the case of the smaller States. Those States whose resources are so limited as virtually to preclude them individually from providing for the requirements of their people in accordance with modern standards have indeed no other practical alternative before them. I would take this opportunity to impress on the Rulers of such States, with all the emphasis at my command, the wisdom of taking the earliest possible steps to combine with their neighbours in the matter of administrative services so far as this is practicable.'

The reply, on behalf of the Princes to His Excellency's aforesaid address has also appeared in the press in extenso; the following relevant extracts are, however, quoted for facility of reference:-

- (i) '... We fully endorse the view that improvements in the administrations of States should emanate from the Rulers concerned wherever they may be needed. We recommend this course, not as a matter of political expediency but as a sacred duty resting on us as Rulers....'
- (ii) '... There is a clear distinction, however, between matters relating to improvement in administration and the question of constitutional reforms in the States. We claim that the decision with regard to the form and extent of constitutional reforms in the States must rest solely with the individual Rulers concerned....'
- (iii) 'The Indian Princes are not averse to the progress in their States with due regard to local conditions and resources.... We deny, however, the right of any party from outside to dictate to us or to coerce us in the matter of constitutional reform within our States....'
- (iv) '... We feel confident that no reasonable person or organisation which stands for the sanctity of pledges would expect of the Crown not to implement its pledges to the Princes both in letter and in spirit'.

- (v) '... Your Excellency will however appreciate that there is no greater impediment to good government in a State than the weakening of its Ruler's authority. Yet such a weakening must inevitably result if unjustified attacks are openly made against the established governments of the States and even doubt is thrown upon the scope of the Ruler's sovereignty'.
- (vi) 'We can assure Your Excellency that the various suggestions of administrative reforms, where they are needed, and to which you have referred in the course of your address are very helpful and have been receiving anxious consideration of the governments of the States'.
- (vii) '... as Your Excellency has remarked in your address we 'have been subjected to attacks which were entirely unjustified, attacks in which one has been unable to trace any scrupulous regard for strict accuracy, or any real desire to promote the welfare of the State or of its people'. It is therefore not unnatural that the States should expect due protection against such attacks....'
- (viii) 'On the other hand, we can emphatically declare that, God willing, the Indian Princes shall not be found wanting in any reasonable contribution which they may be called upon to make, in the discharge of their obligations to the Crown and towards the ordered progress of their States and their Motherland....'
- (ix) 'Your Excellency also referred in your Address to the need for the smaller States, with limited resources to co-operate and combine in matters of administration so far as it may be practicable. This question needs careful consideration from all the view-points involved and relying on Your Excellency's knowledge and respect for the traditions of the Indian States and for the pledges given to the States—big and small—in successive authoritative pronouncements guaranteeing their internal autonomy and integrity, we take it as understood that Your Excellency's suggestion is intended to encourage co-operation, on a voluntary basis and to the extent that States find it practicable, having due regard to local conditions, in certain services of administration provided that the integrity and sovereignty of the States concerned is not impaired....'

In this connection, I wish to invite Your Highness' attention to the resolution unanimously passed at a meeting of the Chamber of Princes in February 1928, in the following terms:-

'That the Chamber of Princes—

Appreciates that it is impossible to apply a uniform standard of administration to the diverse conditions prevailing among the States and that a Ruler and his Government must be the best judges of what measures and methods are most suited to promote the progress and prosperity of their States and subjects;

Recognises the real and permanent value of internal reforms emanating from within the States on the initiative of their Governments and considers it imperative for the future well-being of the States and their Rulers that the Governments of the States should, as occasions demand, carefully review their administrations with a view where necessary, to the progressive realisation of generally accepted ideals of beneficial Government such as—

- (a) A definite code of law guaranteeing liberty of person and property and administered by an independent judiciary, and
- (b) the settlement upon a reasonable and definite basis, of the purely personal expenditure of the Ruler as distinguished from the public charges of administration;

I also enclose herewith (Appendix 'A') a copy of the Notes on Administration and Government circulated in 1927 to the Indian Ruling Princes, by Lord Irwin, the then Viceroy.

Different States, I understand, have reviewed or propose reviewing their administrations to see how far the necessary 'administrative' reforms, advocated in the Chamber Resolution and Lord Irwin's note referred to in para 4 above as well as those recommended by His Excellency the present Viceroy in the extracts from his address quoted in para 2 above, have been given effect to; and to initiate necessary action, where needed, with due regard to local conditions and resources. An occasional stock-taking of our administrations on these lines should obviously be useful in keeping us informed as to how far the necessary reforms have been introduced and what still remains to be done. I shall be grateful, should there be no objection, if Your Highness would intimate to me how far the aforesaid 'administrative' reforms have already been given effect to or are proposed to be inaugurated in Your Highness' State. I shall further be grateful if this information could be supplied to me by the 15th of July 1939.

Trusting this finds Your Highness in the enjoyment of excellent health.

Yours sincerely,
Digvijaysinghji
Maharaja Jam Sahib of Nawanagar
Chancellor, Chamber of Princes

¹ Held on 13 and 14 March 1939 at New Delh.

4. Princes and Federation

Leader, 12 June 1939

Bombay
9 June 1939

The Standing Committee of Princes met at Tajmahal Hotel this morning and considered the Draft Instrument of Accession and the Hydari Committee's¹ report thereon explaining the financial, legal and political implications of it as also the agenda for tomorrow's joint conference of princes and their ministers. In the afternoon the princes held a prolonged in camera meeting to which none except the rulers were admitted.

It is understood the purpose of this meeting was to have a free and frank discussion among the princes on the question of Federation and what attitude they should adopt at tomorrow's joint conference of princes and ministers. His Highness the Jam Saheb, Chancellor the Chamber of Princes, presided over the meeting and about a dozen princes, including High Highness the Maharaja of Bikaner,² were present.

About 100 ministers of smaller states who have arrived here in connection with tomorrow's joint conference met separately and discussed many questions of common interest. The joint conference of princes and ministers commences at 10 a.m. tomorrow at Tajmahal Hotel under the presidency of the Jam Saheb, the Chancellor.

At an informal meeting of several ministers held today resolutions, passed at the conference recently held in Gwalior,³ were considered in the light of further material available subsequently. The material before the meeting considered of the report of the Hydari Committee, the revised Draft of the Instrument of Accession and the expert opinion of Mr J.H. Morgan.⁴ The meeting, it is learnt, gave a careful consideration to the documents before them and modified the previous decisions wherever necessary. These proposals will be sponsored and supported at the joint conference of ministers and princes tomorrow.

The main items that engaged the attention of the ministers and which were regarded likely impediments to the federation were the questions of export duties, definition of frontiers and the executive of the federal machinery. Sec. 297(A) of the Government of India Act was also considered.

¹ The Hydari Committee on Federation, which met in Bombay in April 1939, under the chairmanship of Akbar Hydari, Prime Minister, Hyderabad State, came to the conclusion that the terms of the draft Instrument of Accession were unsatisfactory from the point of view of treaty rights, rights of internal administration and economic rights of states. For details see *Indian Annual Register*, Vol. I, 1939, pp. 432-33.

² Sri Ganga Singhji Bahadur, b. 1880; succeeded to the throne of Bikaner in 1898; went to China in connection with China war of 1900-1901; belonged to Rathore Caste Rajputs; fought for the British Crown in Asia, Europe and Africa; represented the Indian States at the Imperial Conference in 1930; attended the Round Table Conference in 1930 and 1937.

³ The Conference of State Ministers was held at Gwalior on 19 April, and inaugurated by Maharaja Scindia for report to this Conference see *Indian Annual Register*, Vol. I, 1939, pp. 431-32.

⁴ J.H. Morgan, KC; a well known economist; was invited to deliver a Tagore Lecture in University of Calcutta in 1939.

5. Ganpat Rai¹ to M.R. Jayakar,² 16 June 1939

All India Hindu Mahasabha Papers, File No. C-21, NMML

My dear Mr Jayakar,

I thought of writing to you many times but then I hesitated not to trouble you because when you left India you were not enjoying good health and you had to join a nursing home even on arriving in England

I hope you must be studying the developments that are taking place in India. Knowing as I do that you take keen interest in the affairs affecting the political situation in India I herewith enclose leading article of some of the leading dailies of India, both Indian and Anglo-Indian, on the Princes' decision with regard to Federation. Some of the bigger states, particularly Hindu States, did not take a leading part in the recent Bombay Conference³ of the Princes in which this decision was arrived at. Most of the bigger Hindu States have already given their consent to join the Federation. It is only the smaller Hindu States or the Muslim States which took leading part in getting this resolution of rejecting the Instrument of Accession passed. Sir Akbar Hydari,⁴ the president of the Nizam Government's Executive Council, took a leading part. The smaller Hindu States have adopted this attitude because the Viceroy is reported⁵ to have called upon all those States whose annual revenue does not exceed 20 lacs per year to form a group of their own in order to have a joint police and a common High Court for future administration. This action of the Crown Representative has not been liked by the smaller States, and, therefore, in combination with some of the bigger States they have got the resolution passed. They are bound to come to grief if they persist in this attitude. One thing which supports this conclusion on my part is the withdrawal of Sir Bapna⁶ from Minister's Conference and forcible retirement from the Indore States' service. In political circles it is being inferred that Sir Bapna also held anti-Federation views and was going to commit those States to the suicidal policy. I wonder why Sir Manu Bhai Mehta⁷ joined hands with anti-Federations. I hope you remember he had published one article in which he exhorted the Hindu Princes to join Federation, otherwise they would not survive the inimical forces which are collecting against them.

The Privy Council's recent decision of the Tribune Income Tax case has been well received here in India.

With best wishes for your health.

Yours sincerely,
Ganpat Rai

¹ Prominent member of the Hindu Mahasabha.

² Mukund Ramarao Jayakar (1875–1959); educated at Elphinstone High School; graduated from St. Xavier's College, Bombay, 1895; MA in 1897 and LLB in 1902; 1907 joined Bombay Law School as a Professor; Leader of Swaraj Party, Bombay Legislative Council (1923–26); Member, Central Legislative, 1926; Deputy Leader Nationalist Party, 1926–30; played a major role in Gandhi-Irwin Pact; Chairman, Maharashtra University Committee; Vice-Chancellor, University of Poona, 1948–56.

³ The Bombay Conference was held at Taj Mahal Hotel, Bombay on 10 June, presided over by Jam Saheb of Nawanagar. The Conference was attended by 50 Princes; about 50 representatives of states authorized to represent their Rulers.

⁴ Muhammad Salah Akbar Hydari, b. 1894; educated at Bombay University; Balliol College, Oxford; District officer, Madras Presidency, 1920–23; Joint Secretary Indian States Delegation to the Indian Round Table Conference, 1931; Secretary to Government of India, Labour Department, 1938; Prime Minister, Hyderabad State, 1939.

⁵ The Viceroy said this at the Annual Session of the Chamber of Princes, New Delhi, 13–14 March 1939.

⁶ Sir Seraymal Bapna b. 1882; educated at Maharana's High School, Udaipur; Govt. College, Ajmer and Muir Central College, Allahabad; appointed District Judge, Indore State, 1907; Home Minister, 1915; retired on special pension 1921; joined Patiala State as Minister; rejoined Holkar, 1923; Prime Minister, Indore 1923–26; retired in June 1939; Prime Minister, Bikaner 1939–41.

⁷ Manubhai Mehta (1868–1946); Gujarati Lawyer; Professor, administrator and Prime Minister of Baroda, 1916–27, Prime Minister, Bikaner, 1927–37; Gwalior State Service 1937–46; Foreign and Political Minister, Gwalior.

6. Princes and Federation

Editorial, *Leader*, 17 June 1939

17 June 1939

Coming as it does after the conclusions of the Hydari Committee and the Gwalior Conference,¹ the declaration of the joint conference of princes and ministers at Bombay that the revised draft instrument of accession is fundamentally 'unsatisfactory' and, therefore, 'unacceptable', will cause no surprise. But that the decision is not surprising or unexpected, is no argument that the country must approve of it; and we fear it will not. His Highness the Jam Saheb was not wrong in saying that the importance of the princes' decision in this matter to the states, to India and to the empire was so great that it 'must be based on the fullest possible appreciation of our grave responsibility in the matter'. But the decision which the princes have reached is bound to leave an unpleasant feeling that, if they had really cared for their duty towards their states and their country more than for the privileges and powers of their order, the decision might have been different.

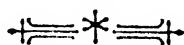
We have not been and are not enamoured of the federal scheme, the many unsatisfactory features of which have been the subject of so much criticism in the press and on the platform. But in our dissatisfaction we cannot afford to ignore the all-important consideration that, if India is to occupy her proper place among the nations, she must achieve political and constitutional unity and that for the achievement of this ideal federation is practically the only means. Nor can we ignore the no less important consideration that, unless something unexpected turns up, the federal scheme is not likely to be amended substantially until it has been worked for some time and the different communities and classes have evolved sufficient unity to be able to exert effective pressure on the authorities in Britain. Therefore, with all our dissatisfaction with the federal scheme, we would like to see it inaugurated, with improvements as far as possible and without unnecessary delay, so that it may be worked for the utmost good it can yield and may pave the way to satisfactory

amendment of the constitution in the light of experience. The Jam Saheb has pointed out that for years 'our representatives have collaborated with the representatives of his Majesty's Government and of British India to evolve a satisfactory scheme for an all-India Federation'. The resolution passed at Bombay has also recorded the 'belief' of the conference that 'it should not be the intention of his Majesty's Government to close the door on an all-India Federation'. All this may be good proof of the princes being on the whole favourably disposed towards federation. But their decision, betraying as it does a spirit of unjustified hesitation, is calculated neither to accelerate the inauguration of federation nor to help in removing any of its glaring defects.

The princes must be fully aware that of the several reasons why progressive opinion in British India has not taken favourably to the federal scheme, one is due to a feeling that, while the princes through their nominees in the federal legislature will be able to interfere in matters relating to British India, the latter will not be in a position to exert anything like a similar influence on the internal administration of the states. And this feeling has been coupled with a suspicion that the influence of the princes in all-India affairs is likely to be exerted in a reactionary spirit in accordance with the wishes of the powers that be. Besides, Indians have felt, and not unnaturally, that while the princes have submitted to the autocratic exercise by the representatives of the Paramount Power of its undefined and almost unlimited powers of supervision and interference, they should betray such an excessive lack of trust and confidence in their own countrymen of British India as well as Indian States. (More recently this could be explained in part by the attitude of the Congress). We are not among those like to treat agreements and treaties as mere scraps of paper; all the same there is a limit to their practical utility, particularly in a period of great and rapid transition. Their Highnesses will do well to realise that paper safeguards can never protect their rights or strengthen their position as the grateful affection of their peoples can. And despite anything said in moments of excitement, they may rest assured that not only their subjects but even people in British India entertain no ill-will towards them. All that is expected of them is that they will associate their people with their administration, transforming themselves gradually into constitutional rulers, and help the progress of their Motherland in her march towards full Dominion Status. By identifying themselves with the progressive forces in the country, the princes can play a creditable part in the political evolution of the country on sound lines. But if they continue to look with distrust on all movements for progress, they will not only alienate the sympathies of all well-wishers of the country but also strengthen the forces which stand not for ordered progress but for a violent destruction of the existing order. We are glad to acknowledge that some among them are fully alive to the need of responding to the increasing political consciousness among their people; and the rest cannot do better than emulate their example; the most recent being that of His Highness of Gwalior.² Instead of attaching too much importance to paper safeguards, let them repose trust in their countrymen and they will have no reason to regret their attitude.

¹ An important conference of ministers met at Gwalior to examine the revised draft instrument. The report of this conference was forwarded to the Chancellor, Chamber of Princes.

² Sir Jiwaji Rao Scindia, b. 1916; ascended the throne on 27 September, 1925; assumed ruling powers in 1936; educated privately till school level; attended Victoria College, Gwalior; administrative training at Bombay and Bangalore; Military training at Poona; Vice-President, East India Association, London, 1937.



7. Princes and Federation

Indian Social Reformer, 17 June 1939, p. 661

It was announced on Tuesday that the Princes who met in Bombay last weekend to consider the draft Instrument of Accession, have rejected its terms as unacceptable. As British Indian opinion also has declared itself in the same sense, the only thing to do now is to scrap the scheme and proceed to deal with the question of devising a strong central Government for British India on a popular basis. The decision of the Princes is, probably, due less to the reasons by which it is supported than to the alarm created by the incursions of the Congress High Command into States' affairs during the last two years. Gandhiji's avowal that the policy of direct intervention was a mistake and that the States people should plough their own furrow, has somewhat eased the mind of the rulers. But the possibility of Gandhiji changing his mind or his followers defying his instructions, continues to disturb the minds of the Rulers. They do not want again to be exposed to the anxieties of the past two years. They want more safeguards to assure them against this contingency. They will join the Federation if it is assumed that they will retain all their existing rights and immunities and are allowed in addition to influence directly and indirectly the political future of British India. The objection of British India, or one of its objections, to the Federation scheme is that it puts the States in a position of unfair advantage at the centre having regard to their interests and the different stages of political development which are to be found among them. A powerful reinforcement to the British Indian objection is furnished in the paper read not long ago by Mr Lionel Curtis¹ before the Institute of International Affairs in London. Speaking from his experience in South Africa and from his study of other Federal constitutions, Mr Curtis concluded: 'The Federal Government must derive its authority, not from the States, but direct from the people themselves who compose the States, and must also be able to enforce obedience to that authority on persons who disobeyed it.' This was the conclusion reached by the American statesmen who drew up the present constitution after the breakdown of the Confederation of thirteen sovereign States which constituted the original Union, due to the difficulty of getting the constituent States to carry out their obligations. 'A confederacy,' to use the words of Mr Curtis, 'could in fact operate only by virtue of continuous civil wars.'

The Indian Federal Constitution is a Federation as regards the Provinces and a Confederacy as regards the States. The Provinces can be got to carry out their obligations to the Federal Government. There is machinery provided for that purpose. But there is no machinery to compel the State to do the same except the uncertain and inscrutable authority of the Paramount Power. Mr M.K. Varadarajan writes in his 'Indian States and Federation':

If a ruler disregards his constitutional duties, the Federation stands helpless within the limits of the constitution, there are really no sanctions at all for enforcing such obligations. The Governor-General will have to appeal to the Crown Representative (the same person in another office) in case of such recalcitrancy to use his good offices and 'advise' the ruler to fulfil his obligations. Paramountcy is thus made the federal sanction and on its exercise depends the smooth working of the Federation.

The Crown Representative, it may be urged, is preferable to a civil war. In Rajkot the Crown Representative came to the rescue of Gandhiji and he will, no doubt, do the same in future disputes between the Federation and any of the States. But all such interventions carry with them certain moral and intangible, if not legal and overt, obligations. Gandhiji perceived this and drew back though he cloaked his withdrawal as a waiver of the benefits of the Gwyer Award. The Crown Representative will accede to the request of the Governor-General only if the Federal Government acceded to the wishes of the Crown Representative conveyed through the Governor-General.

Thus the pivot of this hybrid scheme is the Governor-General—Crown Representative. The responsibility of Federal Ministers to the people is purely nominal. The whole scheme can be brought to a deadlock if a single ruler takes it into his head that the Crown Representative would view an exhibition of recalcitrancy on his parts towards his federal obligations without much disapproval. The viceroy has declared that with the present draft Instrument, the country will be saved from having to go through an experiment which is destined to prove a disastrous failure.

¹ Lionel Curtis, b. 1872; educated at Hailbury; New College, Oxford; called to Bar; Served South African War; Member, Transvaal Legislative Council; Beit Lecturer, Colonial History, Oxford; Fellow of All Souls College; Publications: *The Problem of Commonwealth*, 1916; *The Capital Question of China*, 1932; *World War*, 1945.

8. Gwalior's Lead

Editorial, *National Herald*, 7 July 1939

7 July 1939

The story which an intrepid contemporary unfolds of the part that Gwalior is playing in the Federation pantomime would take away the breath of even those who feel pity for a race of beings crushed between Instruments of Accession and imaginary guillotines, and fear that they will abdicate shortly either individually or collectively. Darbar Virawala's technique in Rajkot reminded men that the States still harbour states craft worthy of Tartars. The Gwalior story is astounding and whoever may be responsible for bringing Gwalior to the leadership of a bloc must definitely rank with the Virawalas of his order. A few days ago, Gwalior led the anti-federation bloc; a few days hence, when the princes are to send their replies to the Government, Gwalior, it is said, will lead the pro-federation bloc. It is stated that Sardar Angre,¹ the Foreign Minister of Gwalior, has not only committed his State privately to the acceptance of the draft Instrument of Accession but has assured Gwalior's participation in Federation. The price for such a part must be pretty precious, for the Political Department is an unrelenting bargainer. It is said that Gwalior has, since it made its last stand, scored one hard-won triumph. The Government of India has waived its right to nominate the Prime Minister in Gwalior and agreed to accept the ruler's unchallenged discretion in the constitution of his executive for the State. Though, we are afraid, paramountcy has become less paramount by the act, this is no small gain to the personal prerogatives of a prince, who works under an anomalous system....

Minus publicity the princes are still at the mercy of the Political Department which seems to be anxious for the fruition of federation, so that, with the princes as props of imperialism, it might obtain a fresh lease of life. But federation, even in its cruder form, implies transfer of power to the people and it would be as foolish to expect a declaration of democracy from a body of rulers as it would be to expect a declaration of atheism from a commission of clergymen. The Gwalior reforms, featured by the subsidized press, amount to this, in Dr Pattabhi's² words.

'The scheme is not even of the Minto-Morley type and has no parallel in British Indian Policy at any of its several stages of development.'

But enlightened Gwalior, having 'dished' Haksar³ for being progressive, is, under the reign of Angre, plunging into the melting-pot of federation. Having threatened to lead the attack, it is threatening to lead the capitulation. The ditcher has thus become the hedger; and we hear that the gallant Bikaner has been taken by surprise. Others must have been equally astounded by Gwalior's apostasy. We are, however, only amused at this civil war in the Cave of Adullam. Darchy died the day it was born, but a post mortem was carried on for nearly ten years till Coroner Simon⁴ delivered

the verdict that death was due to natural causes. If Gwalior, Mysore and Baroda, in league with the Political Department, want to breathe life into the federal effigy, we wish them good luck. But we would suggest one thing to our princes. They might form themselves into two blocs on the basis of their gun-salute, or, since they claim kinship with the constellations, those who are descended from the moon might go in for federation and those who are descended from the sun may go for it.

¹ Sardar Dharamveer Chandroji Angre, b. 1896; educated in a school in Bombay; Sardar School, Gwalior; Agricultural Institute, Allahabad; Premier Jagirdar of Gwalior; Private Secretary to Maharaja Scindia; Huzur Secretary, Gwalior Durbar; Foreign and Political Minister, Gwalior, June 1939.

² Sitaramayya Pattabhi (1880–1959) education: Matriculation Examination from a Christian Mission School, Ellore, 1894; joined CMS Noble College, Masulipatnam; MB and CM degree from Madras Medical College, 1901; Member, Home Rule League; follower of Gandhi; Member, AICC, 1916–52; Member, CWC, 1929–30, 1931, 1934–36, 1938, 1939, 1940–46 and 1948; President, AISPC, 1939 and 1946–48; took part in all major campaigns of Congress; Governor, Madhya Pradesh, 1952–57.

³ P.N. Haksar.

⁴ The Simon Commission Report was released on 7 June 1930. See *IAR*, Vol. I, 1930, pp. 161–92.

9. Chamber of Princes Federation: Copy of a letter dated 20 July 1939, from His Highness the Maharaj Rana¹ of Dholpur to His Excellency the Viceroy

File No. V(b) 36 Pt. B., Vol. IV, 1939, (Basta No. 32), Rajasthan State Archives

I am addressing this letter to Your Excellency in reply to Your Excellency's letter dated the 27th January 1939, regarding the accession of my State to the Federation provided for in the Government of India Act, 1935.

I fully appreciate the time that has been given for the States to come to conclusions on this all important, absorbing and perhaps novel idea from the point of view of the States, to take in and digest all the repercussions that will doubtless follow when once the scheme is working. I am further grateful to Your Excellency for having allowed the last six months to us all, to consult, think over and finally take our decisions. Throughout this period, I feel I am voicing the feelings of all the Princes in India when I say, that we felt deeply grateful to His Majesty's Government for making us understand that our decisions on the acceptance or otherwise of the federal plan for our own States, (which is more than important to the Rulers today), shall remain optional and unfettered.

To clear my own position, I wish to take Your Excellency back to the year 1930, when the first Round Table Conference met in London at St. James's. There too, while discussing this entirely new plan, I felt I could not support a scheme that I knew so little about and I therefore, merely confined my remarks to and stressed one big argument on which I focused, and that was that the Empire and India will be happy with any scheme, however carefully and technically correctly worked out, if the three important elements in it were not going to be on friendly terms of understanding, goodwill and cooperation; the elements being His Majesty's Empire with the British services, the Indian States and their Rulers and the British India composed of many political units. The month of July has arrived at the end of the 6 months, which Your Excellency gave us to come to definite conclusions, and we have since 1930 gone through 9 years, I feel I should not comment on the cooperation, understanding and hardship that one expected and therefore I leave it to Your Excellency to judge whether this great and fundamental idea has been achieved even to a certain way and no more misgivings irritate any of the three important elements.

Some of the Princes amongst my colleagues at the Round Table Conference were of the opinion, that the federal plan would work and would bring into His Majesty's magnificent Empire in India that peace and plenty, which the whole of this Continent is thirsting for, and they hoped that they will carry the federal idea through to successful conclusions, when the time came for it to be inaugurated. But, later events showed that even amongst them, shadows of doubts marred that clear vision of hope which they entertained when they discussed the plan in 1930. We have had many deliberations privately in different places and at different times. We have consulted lawyers to clear the constitutional points of view. We have consulted the equally important economists to give us the financial picture of the States in the Federation, and with all this accumulated wisdom, His Highness the Chancellor convened a meeting recently in Bombay and there they came almost unanimously to one decision and that was, that the plan was not acceptable. This all shows that even those unlike myself, who put greater calculations and confidence in the achievements of the federal plan have definitely seen otherwise. I feel sure that all the technical difficulties presented by the Chancellor after that meeting in Bombay, must have reached Your Excellency in detail.

Apart from the above, I wish to give vent to my own personal feelings on two points which in my mind have always stood in great prominence. They are:-

- (a) Close cohesion of the States to meet and stand against, if need be, any dangers of their being annihilated, and thus proving in fact the utterances of Your Excellency's predecessors of being pillars of the Empire rather than drags on it.
- (b) To correctly read whether the British Indian political bodies are at heart really loyal to His Majesty the King and His Empire in India, as has been interpreted and practiced by the Rulers in the past, and if under such circumstances, can they be our helpful partners in a joint scheme?

About No. 1, our latest effort, to my mind, has been a poor one, in which the States have been further divided into several groups and what little unity we had in the Chamber does not seem to be as strong as personally I would like to have had, if we were going to look at this scheme or any other for Greater India.

About No. 2, as well we all know from our point of view, they are not loyal in the sense either to His Majesty the King or to his Empire. As regards their behaviour towards us, they have recently, so many times, said and done things which makes me believe that instead of their being future cooperative partners, they will be bitter and hostile enemies of princely India as a whole. The above mentioned two facts have always been present in my thought whenever I have looked at the federal plan for India, and I would again beseech Your Excellency to look at them and tell me—if it is necessary later on, whether I am wrong in my reading.

In the Act, as it stands today, I find that there is a provision put down in it by far-sighted statesmen, which under the circumstances mentioned above, would suit me to adopt more than any other at the present moment. The clause that I refer to is the one that even when Federation has started (provided that 50% of the States' quota has entered), those, like me, who have been unable to see fully the merits of the federal plan as compared to those who, after seeing them enter it, can choose to remain outside for twenty solid years, and if by the experience of even little time, after the scheme has started, those of us like me could see that the dangers for the Empire and our homes, were more imaginary than real, the door will be kept open for the entry of those states, that did not come in it at the beginning, for that period of twenty years.

Under the circumstances mentioned above, I feel I cannot make up my mind to enter the Federal scheme on behalf of any State at this stage.

¹ Maharaj Rana Nehal Singh, b. 1893 and succeeded to the throne in 1911; ruling family belongs to Bamrohan Jats.

10. Regarding the Revised Draft Instrument of Accession and Connected Documents [Correspondence regarding Meeting between State Ruling Princes and H.E. the Viceroy to consider the revised draft Instrument of Accession]

Chamber of Princes Records Federation (Secret), File No. IV-b-85, 1939, (Basta No. 35), Rajasthan State Archives

26 July 1939

Your Highness,

During my recent visit to Simla, I had occasion to discuss the Revised Draft Instrument of Accession and connected Documents, in the light of the Resolution adopted by us at Bombay, both with His Excellency the Crown Representative and his Political Advisers.

In the course of these conversations it was suggested that at this stage a meeting between His Excellency the Crown Representative and a limited number of Rulers and Representatives of States may be helpful in exploring avenues towards a satisfactory solution of the problem.

In this connection I am writing to invite Your Highness' views urgently and in confidence on the following matters:-

- (1) Whether as I hope, Your Highness approves of the proposed Meeting?
- (2) Whether Your Highness approves that, in view of the limitation of numbers suggested, the following personnel may be proposed for His Excellency's consideration:-

Members of the Princes' Standing Committee (including the co-opted Members)

1. His Highness of Bahawalpur
2. His Highness of Bikaner
3. His Highness of Bilaspur
4. His Highness of Cooch Behar
5. His Highness of Dunderpur
6. His Highness of Idar
7. His Highness of Mandi
8. His Highness of Patiala
9. His Highness of Rewa
10. His Highness of Sachin
11. His Highness of Sangli
12. His Highness of Wankaner
13. Myself
14. His Highness of Bhopal
15. His Highness of Dewas (JB)
16. His Highness of Dholpur
17. His Highness of Panna

18 to 23. Rulers or Representatives of five 21 gun States, and of Travancore.

(3) That, on the assumption that the proposed Conference with His Excellency may possibly take place at Simla on or about the 21st August (afternoon) and the 22nd August, the programme of Meetings preceding this Conference may be as follows:-

(a) 19th August Saturday (forenoon and afternoon). The Members of the Hydari Committee (along with the Representative of Udaipur) and the Members of the Special Committee appointed by the Gwalior Conference to carry on its work may meet, with Their Highnesses of Bhopal, Bikaner, Patiala and myself, to discuss in the first instance various points in connection with the proposed Conference.

(b) 20th August Sunday (forenoon)

Meeting of the Standing Committee of Princes (in camera) along with the other Rulers who may be invited to the proposed Conference in Simla.

(c) 20th August, Sunday (afternoon)

Meeting of the Rulers and Representatives invited to the proposed Conference in Simla along with other Rulers and Representatives who may be present in Delhi.

Note: In view of the great difficulty in securing accommodation in Simla these days, and the fact that the record of the Chancellor's Secretariat is located at Delhi, to which record constant reference may have to be made during the proposed Meetings, it is intended that the aforesaid Meetings may take place in Delhi.

Thereafter, it is proposed that the Rulers and Representatives concerned may leave Delhi on the night of the 20th, reaching Simla on the forenoon of the 21st August, while the Conference may begin in the afternoon.

In case the dates finally fixed for the Simla Conference are different, the dates of the other Meetings will be changed accordingly.

In view of the urgency of the matter, I shall be grateful if Your Highness would favour me with a reply as soon as possible; and I would further request that the matter may be treated as strictly confidential.

Yours sincerely,
Sd/-

His Highness Maharaja Shri Yadavindra Singhji Bahadur
Palace, Patiala

11. What the Princes Fear

National Front, 30 July 1939

30 July 1939

'Why do the Princes hesitate to enter the Federation? Were they not enthusiastic about it at the time of the 2nd Round Table Conference? Had they not the outlines of the present Instrument of Accession before them then? In 1930-31 the CD Movement was raging. The rapid realization of the Federation would have given them the much needed protection against the rising tide of mass struggle. In the eight years that have intervened what has come instead of the federation, is the growth of the mass struggle, the Assembly elections, the Congress Ministries, further broadening of the mass struggle in the British Provinces and the resounding echo in the States themselves. The Princes are frightened out of their wits. They are afraid of the dangerous contiguity of the Congress provinces. It is not the treaty rights, nor the loss of excise or customs revenue etc. they are worried about. Their main fear is the growing struggle of the Indian People for independence and democracy.

They have not the “imaginative statesmanship” (as the *Times* puts it) to see that the reactionary federation affords them even today just the guarantee against the rising revolutionary tide?

Imperialism has both the imagination and the statesmanship which the princes lack. It is determined to press the princes into accepting the present draft of the Instrument of Accession without making any major modifications. The needs of war demand the iron grip of an autocratic centre and the centralisation of the entire economic resources of the country under it.’

12. Regarding the Revised Draft Instrument of Accession and Connected Documents

Chamber of Princes Records, File No. IV (b) 87, 1939, NAI (Bhopal)

*Ranbir Villa,
Chail,
5th August 1939.*

Yours Highness,

I write to acknowledge with thanks Yours Highness’ Secret and urgent letter dated the 26th July on the subject cited above intimating the suggestion to hold a meeting between His Excellency the Crown Representative and a limited number of Rulers and representatives of States with a view to exploring avenues towards a satisfactory solution of the Federal question. I need hardly say that the proposed meeting has my entire approval, as also the personnel proposed for His Excellency’s consideration.

As regards the programme of meeting preceding the Conference with His Excellency, personally I would prefer that all the meetings proposed to be convened in this connection are held at Simla, instead of at Delhi and Simla; in case, however, Your Highness finds it difficult to arrange all the meetings at Simla, I shall, no doubt, have no objection to attend the meetings both at Delhi and Simla. Kindly communicate to me the dates of the Conference with His Excellency and the meetings preparatory to it as soon as they are definitely fixed.

Yours sincerely,
Sd/
Yadavindra Singh.

13. C.P. Skrine¹ to Yadavindra Singh, 7 August 1939

Chamber of Princes Records, File No. IV(b) 87, 1939, NAI (Bhopal)

*Simla
7 August 1939*

My dear Maharaja Sahib,

I have been asked to inform Your Highness that His Majesty’s Government contemplate laying a White Paper before Parliament once the replies of all Rulers who have been addressed on the subject of their accession to the Federation have been received. The White Paper will deal *inter alia* with the terms of accession offered and their acceptance or otherwise. While its precise form and the degree of detail to be given cannot obviously be settled at this stage and while it may well not be necessary to reproduce the actual letters to His Excellency from Rulers (though no guarantee can be given in this respect) it will not be possible to avoid a statement of the grounds on which Rulers may have decided to decline to accede on the terms offered.

I may add for Your Highness' information that the position as stated above is being explained to all Rulers who have received the Federal offer, and an opportunity is being given to those Rulers who have already sent a reply which does not constitute an acceptance to make any alteration which they may think desirable in the letter which they have addressed to His Excellency the Crown Representative. The Object of doing this is not, of course, to induce Rulers in any way to alter the substance of their replies but merely to give them an opportunity, should they wish to take advantage of it, to modify or readjust the wording of their replies in view of the possibility now envisaged of their subsequent publication.

With kindest regards,

Yours sincerely,

¹ Resident for Punjab States from July 1939.

14. Note by the Nawab Ruler of Bahawalpur¹

Chamber of Princes Records, File No. IV(b)87, 1939, NAI (Bhopal)

Sadiq-Garh-Palace
15th August, 1939

This is a very important and critical moment. The decision we are to arrive at now will have very far-reaching consequences for our order.

The question is whether to federate or not. I am sure Their Highnesses will agree with me that this is not the time to reject Federation on academic considerations. There is no doubt that those of Their Highnesses who performed the role of our spokesmen at the first Round Table Conference and who gave birth to the idea of Federation considered the question of Federation in all its aspects and weighed its pros and cons before blessing it on behalf of the Princes of India.

Nor can we consistently reject the idea of Federation on the plea that the Congress and the Muslim League do not favour it. For one thing, our spokesmen at the first Round Table Conference did not put forth the idea of Federation with the concurrence of the Congress or of the League. Secondly, the Congress and the League now do not want us to join Federation they would very much like us to federate on their own terms. It would, therefore, be illogical for us to pander to the wishes of any political party. We must examine the question from our own point of view.

The question then becomes whether the terms communicated by His Excellency the Crown Representative are suitable for us. Much ink has been spilt in criticising these terms and among the conflicting mass of opinion it is rather difficult to steer in the right direction. The Bombay Conference has done good service in narrowing down the issues and coming to the conclusion that we should fasten our objections on those points only which were common in the Hydari Committee's Report and in the recommendations of the Gwalior Conference in the draft of the proposed reply to His Excellency the Crown Representative, circulated by His Highness the Chancellor, these points are enumerated as follows:

- (a) Insufficiency of safeguards for the extra-territorial rights of States,
- (b) Unsatisfactory nature of the proposed administrative agreement,
- (c) Unsatisfactory nature of the financial arrangements concerning the States.

If we carefully examine these we will find:

- (a) This is of great importance to us. There is no doubt that His Majesty's Government realise the importance of it and wish to meet us on this point if they can. We should, therefore, have no further cause of complaint.
- (b) As regards this, the Punjab States Council, on consideration of the whole question, came to the conclusion that the draft administrative agreement proposed by the Government was satisfactory. Professor Morgan has also advised the States to accept it without further demur and in this connection I would strongly urge upon Their Highnesses the necessity of dispassionately considering his views. This Agreement, apart from putting all the States at par, concedes to all the States as much administration as is delegated to a major province. What more could the States rightly claim? If the list of federal subjects is carefully examined, it will be found that it will be possible under this Agreement for all the States to get administration in matters which affect the day-to-day lives of their subjects. But even the biggest States cannot rightly claim administration in such important subjects as Army, Navy, Posts and Telegraphs, Railways and Major Ports. Therefore, the objections raised to the administrative arrangement proposed by Government are not such as to cause a deadlock.
- (c) Coming now to the criticism leveled against the financial arrangement of the Federation, this falls under the following categories:
 - (1) Excise duties
 - (2) The assumption of power to impose a customs cordon round the States.
 - (3) Power to provinces under proposed Section 297-A(2).
 - (4) Danger of further levy of taxes under the items of List I.
- (1) I think it may be asserted without fear of being contradicted that arrangements in respect of this follow the statement of Sir Akbar Hydari made on behalf of the States at the Round Table Conference. Obviously it would be hard to expect that the States should be allowed to retain future excises. Objection has also been raised to the stabilisation of the States' share of the excise revenues as it stood in 1936-37 and it has been suggested that the time-limit should be altered to the date of Federation. But such a suggestion if carried out would undoubtedly give greater advantage to certain states which have introduced excisable industries after the year 1936-37, irrespective of their local needs. Therefore, the date proposed by Government is more or less equitable on the whole.
- (2) As regards this, since States are in a position to create difficulties against neighbouring units (either provinces or States) the assuring of power to the Federation to protect such units cannot be regarded as unreasonable.
- (3) I understand that there is no intention to give fresh powers to provinces by the proposed Section 297-A (2), which is merely a saving provision, and I am sure that, if we can convince the Government of India that this provision, as drafted, may give unintended powers to provinces, they will be prepared to consider its revision to remove the doubts of the States.
- (4) As regards this, the general trend of the legal opinion is that the Federation has no implied power to levy taxes under the various items of the list of the federal subjects, unless they are expressly provided.

Thus it is clear that there appear to be no reasonable grounds for us to show hesitation or to give an impression that we wish to create hitches in the way of Federation.

If the political situation in India stands in our way, I think we cannot escape its consequences by not entering Federation. As the *London Times* recently puts it,

'the existing irresponsible centre, if retained much longer, will constitute a weakness in the administrative structure which will ultimately affect the States even more than the Provinces.'

Therefore, in my humble opinion, we shall be in a better position to create a wholesome atmosphere by entering Federation without further delay. It should be realized that no political party in the proposed Federation will be able to come into power, without the help of the States representatives; and no political party which thus assumes power with the help of our representatives can ride rough-shod over our rights and interests. This is the greatest safeguard for us and we should not miss it.

The one and only alternative to our refusal to federate will be the creation of a Federation of British Indian Provinces and I would rather leave unsaid what the position of the States would be vis-à-vis such a Federation.

I would, therefore, earnestly beg of Their Highnesses to consider all the implications and arrive at a decision which may stand challenge at the bar of History in the years to come. I for one am whole-heartedly in favour of accepting the terms communicated by His Excellency the Crown Representative with such modifications as His Excellency is pleased to concede on our representation.

I am confident that we are all in agreement in reposing our full trust in His Excellency Lord Linlithgow as our very sincere friend and well-wisher, and one who is ever keen to safeguard the interests of Our Order.

¹ Nawab Aljah Sir Sadiq Mohammed Khan V. Abban Bahadur, b. 1904, education Aitchison Chiefs College, Lahore, invested with full ruling powers in 1924, Member, Standing Committee, Chamber of Princes, Direct Descendent of Abbasid Khaliphas of Baghdad and Cairo.

15. Note by the Sawai Ruler of Alwar¹ .

Chamber of Princes Records, File No. IV(b)87, 1939, NAI (Bhopal)

*Vijay Mandir
Alwar, Rajputana
18th August, 1939*

Your Highness,

At this critical juncture a heavy responsibility rests on the shoulders of Indian Princes. Within about a week's time they will be required to send their replies to His Excellency the Crown Representative signifying their willingness or otherwise to join the Federation of India under the terms conveyed to them by His Excellency's letter of January last together with its accompaniments.

Ever since the famous Bombay Conference of Princes and Ministers in June last we have been treated to conflicting reports in the newspapers of what this Prince or that was going to do or is likely to do, as well as to various pieces of advice as to what we ought to do or what the consequences would be if we acted or did not act in a particular way. The crux of the problem, therefore, is what the Princes individually are really thinking about Federation. I have for some time been seeking to find this out & now I am able to say from correspondence exchanged and from private discussions how a large number of Princes are actually reacting to the problem. Several Princes have done me the honour of asking me what I have decided myself to do with regard to accession to the Federation and I have, therefore, decided to put down in complete frankness a few thoughts that have been

accumulating in my mind on this question of Federation, thoughts which have weighed with me in my decision to join the Federation. I am addressing these thoughts to Your Highness not because I wish to arrogate to myself any superior wisdom but because I am convinced that at this critical stage in the history of the Indian States we the Rulers should openly and straightforwardly state what we feel in the inmost of our hearts.

For several years now the Princes of India and their Ministers assisted by eminent legal men have been engaged in studying the problem of Indian States' Accession to the Federation of India. During these years the literature that has accumulated as a result of various conferences, group meetings, committee deliberations and general conferences, not to mention the valuable contributions to it by the more experienced and learned among our brother Princes, has analysed those problems in all their aspects and in such great detail that it is unnecessary for any one to wish to add to it, were one indeed capable of doing so. I disclaim any such capacity or desire. What I shall venture to do is only to refer to certain broad aspects of the problem before the great importance of which other considerations pale into comparative insignificance.

If we can classify the Princes according to their reactions to the problem of the Federation I think we can divide them into three main categories. Firstly there are those Princes who are definitely not in favour of acceding to the Federation on the terms offered and who wish to leave it to His Majesty's Government to alter the terms in such a way as to make them more acceptable, while also reserving the right to refuse even the revised terms should they fall short of expectations.

Secondly, there are Princes who are prepared to signify their willingness to accede to the Federation, provided that the specific charges which they desire are incorporated in their Instruments of Accession. These desired changes must vary from State to State according to the local circumstances and, therefore, a strict adherence to the findings on recommendations of any committee or conference is not possible of attainment. Moreover by the terms of His Excellency the Crown Representative's letter the Princes are precluded from taking this course; that is to say, of stating that they would join the Federation only after certain conditions precedent are satisfied, particularly if these conditions are wholly inconsistent with the terms offered. Therefore the Princes who belong to this category are also in effect saying that they are not prepared to accede to the Federation under the present terms.

Thirdly, there are a number of Princes who are prepared to agree to accede to the Federation on the terms offered while at the same time they would most earnestly request His Excellency the Crown Representative to move His Majesty's Government to have the terms of accession modified or adjusted where such modification or adjustment is justified. We all know and appreciate that both His Excellency Lord Linlithgow and Sir Bertrand Glancy are sympathetic towards all the reasonable view points of the Indian States and we can, therefore, confidently hope that they will do everything humanly possible to help the princes. There is certainly no greater friend of the Princes today than His Excellency Lord Linlithgow but even he will find it impossible to help us if we cut the ground from underneath his feet by our putting forward impossible demands for his acceptance. I think we all realise sufficiently well that if the States out of exaggerated fears insist on impossible and unreasonable alterations in the offered terms of Accession they will be courting rejection of even their reasonable and legitimate claims.

We have also been recently informed that immediately the replies of the Princes have been received by His Excellency the Crown Representative and are submitted to the Secretary of State for India, a White Paper will be issued by His Majesty's Government. It is obvious, therefore, that the confidential negotiations which have been going on between His Excellency the Crown Representative on behalf of His Majesty's Government and the Indian Princes will soon cease to be confidential and that the terms offered to the Princes and the replies of the Princes will be

published and discussed by Parliament and in the Press before long. It does not need much imagination to realise that once these terms and our replies to them are published agitation will immediately begin against, what our opponents will try to argue, the too liberal terms offered to us, not to mention of intense opposition to further concessions. The Princes will then have to face the problem of justifying their demands in public, a task which is not capable of accomplishment unless our case is based on reason and fairness. Therefore it is incumbent upon us that our case should not be drawn up in a spirit of uncompromising hostility or antagonism to other Units of the Federation.

The fears entertained by the Princes when they are asked to accede to the Federation of India under the present terms are in relation to:

- (i) the effect of accession on the fiscal interests of the States and
- (ii) the effect of accession on their Sovereignty and their internal autonomy.

With regard to the effect of accession on the fiscal interests of the State I most certainly hope that if we can convince His Excellency the Crown Representative and His Majesty's Government of our real difficulties we shall get from them a fair deal. I think it can be hoped that it is the intention of His Excellency the Crown Representative and His Majesty's Government to try to adjust the financial burden upon the States in an equitable manner. It is also hoped that the terms of some of the financial items in the Draft Instrument of Accession will be modified to meet the legitimate demands of the States. But this adjustment can only be effected on some reasonable basis. The States cannot refuse to meet a fair share of the financial burden when the British India Provinces are called upon to bear a similar or even a larger burden. In fairness, therefore, one has to admit that when adjustment is possible the financial aspect of the Federation should not be a stumbling block against our accession.

With regard to Sovereignty and internal autonomy, we Rulers, are naturally loath to part with them. We regard our Sovereignty as our ancient and legitimate heritage to attain and bequeath which our ancestors shed their blood and treasure. But a dispassionate study should convince any one that the Sovereignty was not and has never been a thing without a background. Whatever political theory may preach, in practice Sovereignty has always had certain limitations operating over and round it. Even the greatest Absolutist in the history of our country had always to work within certain limitations whether imposed by usage, custom, religion or public opinion. Again, Indian conception of Raj Dharma does not lay emphasis so much on Sovereignty as on Duty. I, therefore, feel and feel earnestly that we should not unnecessarily raise exaggerated fears of losing a thing which at best has always been a circumscribed thing and at worst a convenient political fiction. Nay, I go further and say that if as a result of our joining Federation we lose a part of our Sovereignty over our territories, that loss will be more than made up by our gaining a share in the Sovereignty over a much wider area which comprises the Federated territory. At present in a large number of very important matters which affect the life of our States, and which after Federation, will become matters of Federal concern, we are unable to exercise any influence whatsoever except through the good graces of the Political Department. After Federation, we as Federated Units will be able to materially influence the policies. In any case whether we federate or do not federate our Sovereignty, I fear, will not remain a thing apart, a thing sacred and sacrosanct, a thing which will escape unscathed when the forces at work all round us within and without our respective 'frontiers' have had their play. I think we would be living in a world of complete make-believe if we think that our individual States can any longer have 'individual' existence divorced from the current of the general life of the whole of India. If this proposition is true, then the insistence on the legal aspect would not help us in any way and should not, therefore, be over

emphasised. We must approach the problem as practical realists, as statesmen who have a big problem to face and solve.

If I have understood aright the part taken by the Princes in the building up of the Federal plan, it is based on their noble willingness to make some sacrifice in order that their united Motherland may achieve her legitimate aspirations and rise to her full political status within the British Commonwealth. To say that there are elements in our country which have other political ambitions would be true; but it would not be true to say that therefore we should retire into our own domestic affairs and that they should be left to their own devices. That would indeed be a counsel of despair. If the Princes now jettison the Federal plan because of some of its shortcomings, some of which are capable of adjustment if we are reasonable, and if no other and better All India Federal plan is forthcoming history will hold the Princes responsible. This would indeed be a very great responsibility for the Princes to undertake. I cannot see how the pressing political problem of our Motherland can be solved in any satisfactory manner except by the Princes agreeing now and once for all to take their share of sacrifice and burden. To attempt to take as much as we can and to give as little as we need will earn for us an unenviable verdict on all sides. We may for a time scorn and neglect this verdict but it will follow us throughout our lives and its consequences will be far-reaching.

These then are the thoughts which have influenced me to decide to accede to the Federation of India under the present terms while I entertain the strong hopes that His Excellency the Crown Representative, whose sympathy for the Princes and solicitude for their welfare are well known, will endeavour to have the terms adjusted where possible to further safeguard the legitimate interests of the States.

With all good wishes.

Yours very sincerely,
Sd/-
Tej Singh.

¹ Sawai Maharaj Tej Singh Dev, Ruler of Alwar, succeeded to the throne on 22 July 1937.

16. Mayurbhanj State and Federation: Maharaja of
Mayurbhanj to Linlithgow, 28 August 1939

Prime Minister's Office, Patiala State Records, File No. 10334, Chamber of Princes Records,
NAI (Bhopal)

Baripada
Mayurbhanj State
28 August 1939

Your Excellency,

I beg to invite a reference to Your Excellency's letter dated the 27th January, 1939, on the question of accession of my State to the Federation provided for in the Government of India Act, 1935. At the outset I must convey my gratitude to Your Excellency for the time allowed to me for the purpose of replying to the letter.

I need hardly say that I have given the most serious consideration to Your Excellency's letter and the proposed terms of accession which have been recently modified as a result of communications from various princes and discussions with the Standing Committee of the Chamber

of Princes. And if in the following submission I set forth considerations which make it difficult for me to agree unconditionally to execute the Instrument of Accession on behalf of my State within the said terms, I can give Your Excellency my solemn assurance that it is only because of the grave sense of responsibility that weights on me in the matter, and certain doubts that I feel in regard to the details of the present scheme. It is my earnest hope that Your Excellency will be graciously pleased to reconsider the present proposals in the light of my submissions, and that a suitable modification of the terms will yet be possible to be made so as to enable me to accord my support to them.

17. Nizam's Terms for Joining Federation

Bombay Chronicle, 30 August 1939

Simla

29 August 1939

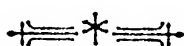
Since the departure of the Princes and their advisers from Simla, the outlook for Federation is believed to have become brighter as a result of information that is trickling through. It is probable that Hyderabad will hold out till the last and that a few other States like Bikaner will also hesitate to join Federation. In case of the majority of the States, however, though they are likely to ask for satisfaction on a few points in their reply to the Viceroy, this may not be found ultimately to constitute insuperable difficulties in the way of Federation.

As already reported, as a result of discussions at Simla several points, though not of an essential character, have been conceded by the Viceroy. A few other points are believed to have been referred to the Secretary of State for India for consideration. There is an impression that official opinion in England is less in favour of accommodating the Princes on some of these points than the Government of India. As concessions have already been made on some of the points, the hope is naturally entertained in the Princely Circles that a few more of the outstanding points will be similarly conceded.

It is understood that His Excellency Highness the Nizam¹ has made certain important conditions on which alone he is prepared to consider the Federal proposals favourably and that he is not prepared to accept any compromise on them. It is believed that one of these points is that Hyderabad should be given a sea port near about Masulipatam with a corridor connecting it with Hyderabad territory. This and a few other conditions raised by the Nizam are such as not likely to afford a satisfactory solution and the Nizam's reply, therefore, is interpreted to be a definite negative.

A few states are understood to have taken up the attitude that as the Government of India Act allows a period of 20 years after the inauguration of the Federal Constitution during which any State may join Federation, they should prefer to wait and see how those who enter the Federation from the start fare before coming in themselves. The attitude of this class of States also is being interpreted here as a definite negative, for the reason that the inauguration of Federation will have to depend upon others and then only this class of States may make up their mind later as to whether to join it or not. The number of such States, however, appears to be small.

¹ Sir Mir Osman Ali Khan Bahadur, Nizam ul Mulk Asaf Jah, b. 1886; Ascended the throne, 1911; educated privately; married daughter of Nawab Jahangir Jung, a nobleman representing a branch of the Nizam's family.



18. Yadavindra Singh to C.P. Skrine, 2 September 1939

Chamber of Princes Records, File No. IV(b) 87, 1939, NAI (Bhopal)

Ranbir Villa

Chail

2 September 1939

My dear Mr Skrine,

I write to acknowledge with thanks your Confidential DO Letter No. F.1-Fed/39 dated 7 August intimating that His Majesty's Government contemplate laying a White Paper before Parliament when the replies of all the Rulers have been received on the subject of their accession to the Federation. As you may be aware, the Rulers have all along been under the impression that in view of the repeated advice from the Crown Department that all correspondence exchanged regarding the Federal offer should be treated as strictly confidential, the contents of the communications that may be addressed by them on the subject would likewise receive the same secrecy. In the replies that the Rulers will send in this behalf, expression may be given to certain sentiments and certain arguments may have to be adduced which may be intended for the exclusive perusal of His Excellency the Crown Representative and His Majesty's Government. It will, indeed, put the Rulers in a very embarrassing situation if the actual replies are reproduced in the proposed White Paper, which will provide a handle to the unscrupulous critics who are not chary of distorting facts or of putting uncharitable interpretations of the Rulers' sentiments. While I appreciate the necessity of issuing a White Paper on the subject to be laid before Parliament, I would earnestly urge that the White Paper under reference should mention the terms of accession offered, their acceptance and where the Rulers have decided to decline to accede on the terms offered, the grounds which may have impelled the Rulers concerned to do so should be referred to in general terms. There should, however, be no occasion to reproduce the actual letters to His Excellency from the Rulers which will serve no useful purpose.

With kindest regards,

Yours sincerely,

19. C.P. Skrine to Yadavindra Singh, 15 October 1939

Chamber of Princes Records, File No. IV(b) 87, 1939, NAI (Bhopal)

Lahore

15 October 1939

My dear Maharaja Sahib,

Will Your Highness kindly refer to my letter No. F.1-Fed/39-F, dated 5/6 September 1939 in which I informed you that your views in regard to the publication of a White Paper specifying the grounds on which Rulers might have declined to accede to the Federation on the terms offered had been communicated to the Political Department.

I have now been informed that, for reasons which Your Highness will no doubt appreciate, the intention to publish in the near future a White Paper of the kind contemplated has been abandoned. The Political Department have added that, while it is not possible in existing circumstances to foresee with exactitude the conditions that may emerge at the conclusion of hostilities, there can be no guarantee that when the time comes the replies of Rulers to His Excellency the Crown Representative's letter of 27 January 1939, will not be published in extenso. If, in the light of this

possibility, Your Highness should desire to make any modifications in the terms of your letter it would be appreciated if the Political Department could be informed of these modifications at your earliest convenience.

20. Yadavindra Singh to the Maharaja of Jam Saheb, 27 October 1939

Chamber of Princes Records, File No. IV(b) 87, 1939, NAI (Bhopal)

Motibagh Palace

Patiala

27 October 1939

Yours Highness,

As Your Highness must be aware, in August last the Political Department intimated the various States that His Majesty's Government contemplated laying a White Paper before the Parliament specifying the grounds on which some of the Rulers may have declined to accede to the Federation on the terms offered. It was stated that while it may not be necessary to reproduce the actual letters to His Excellency from the Rulers, though no guarantee could be given in this respect, it would not be possible to avoid a statement of the grounds on which Rulers may have decided to decline to accede. In reply I intimated the Hon'ble Resident that the Rulers had all along been under the impression that in view of the fact of the repeated advice from the Crown Department that all correspondence exchanged regarding the Federal Offer should be treated as strictly confidential, the contents of the communications that may be addressed by them on the subject would likewise receive the same strict secrecy. In the replies that the Rulers have sent on the subject, expression may have been given to certain sentiments intended for the exclusive perusal of His Excellency the Crown Representative and His Majesty's Government. While appreciating the necessity of issuing a White Paper on the subject to be laid before Parliament, I had suggested, therefore, that the White Paper under reference should mention the terms of accession offered and their acceptance and where the Rulers had declined to accede on the terms offered, the grounds which may have impelled the Rulers concerned to do so, should be referred to in general terms. I have now been informed by the Residency that there can be no guarantee that when the time comes the replies of the Rulers to His Excellency the Crown Representative's letter will not be published in extenso. Personally, I feel that the Rulers will be put in a very embarrassing situation if the actual replies are reproduced in the proposed White Paper, which may provide, in certain cases, a handle to the unscrupulous critics who are not chary of distorting facts or of putting uncharitable interpretations on the Rulers' sentiments. I shall be grateful if Your Highness will appraise me of your view in the matter and also let me know if it is intended to lay the matter before the Standing Committee.

STATES I: JAMMU & KASHMIR

1. Lull before storm in Kashmere

Congress Socialist, 1 January 1939

1 January 1939

Very little is known to the people living outside the State territories about the actual happenings in the Jammu and Kashmir State. Whatever has appeared in the outside Press with regard to our

satyagraha campaign launched in the State about three months ago was the outcome of the brains of the venal enemies of the movement or the representative of the News Agency subsidized by the State Government to the extent of Rs 1200 a year. What actually happened in the State during those days of direct action in Kashmir or is happening at present, no reliable account of it is appearing in the Press. There are manifold reasons for such an apathy on the part of Press representatives in respect of our struggle for the achievement of Responsible Government.

Besides sending all vocal people to jail, almost all the unbiased Press Representatives were also committed to prison under Section 3 of an emergency law known as Notification No. 19L of 1931¹. Although the preamble of this Notification reads as 'Whereas an emergency has arisen which makes it necessary to provide for the conferment of special powers upon certain officers for the suppression of disorder and the restoration and maintenance of Law and Order,' and though that emergency no longer exists now, the authorities did not fight shy of enforcing the emergency law to crush the movement and more than 300 respectable subjects of Highness are detained in jail under this very section of the regulation. And the pity is that this law empowers ordinary Sub-Inspector of Police to arrest any person suspected to have promoted or to have an intention of promoting disaffection against the authority of the State Government. Persons belonging to the honourable professions such as pleaders, doctors, journalists and traders etc. were committed to gaol under this very section of the regulation by various Sub-Inspectors. Members of the State Assembly and Municipal Commissioners even were not spared. They too were sent to prison by Sub-Inspectors.

It will not be out of place if I give here the exact wordings of the section referred to above. This will, I think, give the readers an idea about the height of repressive measures used in crushing the popular movement. The section reads 'A competent authority (Sub-Inspector of Police) may arrest without warrant any person against whom a reasonable suspicion exists that he has promoted or assisted to promote or intends to promote, disaffection against the authorities of the Government, or that he has acted or intends to act in a manner prejudicial to the restoration or maintenance of law and order'.

(b) 'In making such arrests a competent authority may use any means that may be necessary provided that no person shall be detained in jail for a period exceeding one month'.

In spite of these Ordinances, about 1000 people Sikhs, Hindus, Muslims, Kisan and Mazdoors responded to the call—courted imprisonment, paid heavy fines and punitive taxes, and suffered brutal lathi and other charges. I need not mention the brutal force used and inhuman treatment adopted while realizing the fines and taxes. People were forced to part with their cooking utensils, beddings, food grains, oxens to pay off their fines and taxes. Wholesale arrests of responsible gentlemen, imposition of heavy fines, creation of punitive police posts, all these measures did not succeed in crushing the spirit of the civil resisters. But the 'War Council' had to declare total suspension of the activities of Mohalla Maisuma (Srinagar). The satyagraha movement and defiance of Section 144 by delivering speeches in prohibited areas, was suspended about a month ago.

It was a reign of terror that prevailed in the State during the first two months of the movement. No body could think himself safe and free from being suspected by the Police. So much so that even Doctors had not the courage to attend patients lying in the houses of convicted persons.

It has been the policy of the State Government to term the movement as communal, as one started not to achieve responsible Government but to have one Raja Mohd. Akbar Khan² (sentenced to 1 year's imprisonment under Section 124A) released. But the statements issued by the Hindu and Muslim Nationalist leaders of the State have frustrated all their plans. The State Government or their Agents have the boldness to call the popular movement a Muslim movement and they deliberately ignore the active participation of such prominent non-Muslim leaders of outstanding

influence and following as Sardar Budh Singh³, ex-MLA, Pt Jia Lal Kilam⁴, President Bar Association, and an ex-MLA, Pt Keshapa Bandhu⁵, Editor *Kesari*, Pt Prem Nath Bazaz⁶, ex-Member Glancy Commission, and Dr Shamby Nath Peshin,⁷ MBBS, President Hindu Progressive Party.

The movement was in fact, precipitated by the Government, and the truth of this can be proved to the hilt before any impartial tribunal. The sponsors of the movement wanted, in the heart of their hearts, to avoid strife as is evident from the manifesto issued by them only two days before the Satyagraha commenced with regard to the demand for Responsible Government. They were constrained to take up the challenge thrown before them in the form of demanding security (under Section 108 CPC) for maintaining order from Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah,⁸ known as Sher-i-Kashmir, Sardar Budh Singh, Messrs Sadiq and Saieed, Members of the State Assembly.

Now that defiance of law and offering of Satyagraha have been suspended people have commenced to reiterate their demand for Responsible Government under the aegis of HH the Maharaja Bahadur⁹ from public platform. Meetings are daily held in different mohallas of the city where speeches are made by prominent Hindu and Muslim leaders. It is apparent that the people of the State are determined to achieve Responsible Government by all peaceful and legitimate means and no amount of repression can stand in their way of putting forth their demand. It is upto the Durbar to consider the peoples' demand favourably.

About 400 persons are still in jail including Sheikh Mohd. Abdullah, six MLAs two Municipal Commissioners, one Pleader, six editors, Messrs Jia Lal Kilam, Budh Singh, Kashyapa Bandhu and Prem Nath Bazaz. These and others have been committed to prison under various sections of Ranbir Panel Code, Seditious Meeting Act and Regulation 19L of 1931.

They are in different jails of the State. People get inspiration from them. Their release falls due after about ten weeks. Who knows what turn things will take after they are allowed to breathe in the free air. But one thing is sure and that is that relations between the different communities living in the state will become more brotherly and cordial. The politics of the State will be entirely nationalized. The name of the Muslim Conference will be formally converted into National Conference and the demand for Responsible Government more vigorously made.

All the repressive measures taken by the State to crush the movement have not in the least disheartened or disappointed us. We are united, our demand for establishment of Responsible Government in the State by all peaceful and legitimate means under the aegis of HH the Maharaja Bahadur, as envisaged in the National demand, is unanimous.

Notification 19L of 1931 was originally enacted on 24 September 1931 to direct the course of martial law in Srinagar and other places. It was withdrawn by a proclamation on 5 October 1931, but then again promulgated on 1 June 1933. The decree empowered the government to arrest any person without warrant and confiscate private property.

⁴ Raja Mohammed Akbar Khan of Mirpur, a selfless political leader; Zamindar by birth with some landed property; led the movement for responsible government in Mirpur; editor of Weekly, *Sach*, which was known as advocating the cause of the down-trodden, sentenced to 3 years' imprisonment for a speech criticizing the government.

⁵ Budh Singh was devoted to the cause of poor and was popularly known as Mahatma; joined the Kashmir State Service at an early age, Kisan party member from Mirpur Legislative Assembly, 1934; resigned in 1936; joined National Conference and was its president in 1940 and 1941, after independence Member of Parliament.

⁶ Pandit Jia Lal Kilan was a legal luminary and President of Bar Association; appointed as Judge; represented Srinagar in Legislative Assembly; Member, Working Committee of National Conference; resigned on 30 April 1939; author of '*A History of the Kashmiri Pandits*'

⁷ Pandit Kashyapa Bandhu; editor, *Kesari*, arrested in 1938 while participating in a public meeting in defiance of Section 144; Signatory, to a Manifesto of 'National Demands'; Member, Working Committee of National Conference; resigned on 30 April 1939

⁸ Prem Nath Bazaz, (b 1905); graduated from Punjab University; 1927; non-official member, Grievances Enquiry Commission, 1931; Started *Vitasta* in 1932 the first daily newspaper in the valley; founded the weekly, *Hamdard* in 1935; imprisoned in 1938 for 6 months and in 1947 for 3 years; returned to Kashmir in 1962; author of *Inside Kashmir and Azad Kashmir*.

⁷ Dr Shambhu Nath Peshin, educated at Lahore and Kashmir, was President of the Hindu Programme Society and Member of the National Conference in 1939.

⁸ Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, (b. 1905), educated in Lahore and the Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh; initiated a regular campaign for responsible government; founder, Kashmir Muslim Conference which later became the National Conference in 1938; Launched Quit Kashmir Movement in 1946; elected President, All India States People's Conference; released from prison in 1947; supported Kashmir's accession to India; detained from 1953-January 1958 and April 1958-64; the Sheikh was Kashmir's most outstanding leader. He enjoyed immense popularity amongst the people who idolized him as 'Shere-i-Kashmir' (Lion of Kashmir).

⁹ Raja Hari Singh succeeded to the throne in 1925; educated under the supervision of an English teacher and at Mayo College, Ajmer; trained in the Imperial Cadet Corps, Dehradun, 1915; Commander-in-Chief of the State forces; Senior Member of State Council to assist Maharaja Pratap Singh in administration.

2. Memorial to Raja of Poonch: Demand for Separate Council

Bombay Chronicle, 4 January 1939

4 January 1939

The demand for the establishment of a separate representative Council in Poonch, is contained in a Memorial submitted to the Raja Sahib of Poonch¹ by his Muslim subjects.

Poonch is a jurisdictional Jagir and the Raja enjoys internal powers of management subject to the general superintendence and control of His Highness' Government, Jammu and Kashmir. The total area of Poonch is 1,627 sq. miles and the population is 387, 334. At present the Poonch Jagir is also represented in the State Assembly, the Poonch Muslims having two elected seats and the Hindus having one seat nominated by the Raja Sahib of Poonch. The view contained in the Memorial is that the State Assembly serves no useful purpose for the Poonch people and a separate representative Council should be formed.

The memorialists bitterly oppose the idea of transferring the general superintendence and control of the law courts of Poonch to the High Court of Judicature, Jammu and Kashmir State. The memorialists say that such a transfer will serve no useful purpose for the Poonch subjects. They, however ask for the establishment of a High Court in Poonch separately.

The memorialists demand that greater attention be paid towards the educational advancement and urge that an intermediate college be immediately opened at Poonch.

The memorialists further say that the Poonch administration has suffered a loss of about 75,000 per year at the hands of the Kashmir administration. This amount used to be realized at Kobala, by the Kashmir Durbar as 'Rasoom Poonch' and paid to the Raja Sahib of Poonch. But for some time back no such amount was being paid. The memorialists urge that the Kashmir Government be requested to pay the amount as usual, so that this huge amount may help the nation-building Departments of Poonch.

The Kashmir Government, by unseating the seven members of the Muslim Conference Party in the State Assembly, has created another opportunity of testing the 'power' of the Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference, at a time when its powerful leaders including Mr S.M. Abdullah are in jail.

The Working Committee of the Muslim Conference has decided to fight the elections and show its might. The Working Committee will shortly meet to nominate its candidates for all the seven seats declared vacant.

¹ In 1820 Raja Gulab Singh's brother, Dhyani Singh, who had served Ranjit Singh as Dewan, was rewarded with Poonch; later, when Ghulam Singh gained control of Kashmir, this small Kingdom became a *Jagir* of its powerful portion; the Raja of Poonch owing loose allegiance to the Maharaja of Kashmir; Pratap Singh's heir, Hari Singh, and Raja of Poonch had strained relations.

3. Jawaharlal Nehru to Gangaram Wazir,¹ 6 January 1939*SWJN*, Vol. 9, pp. 409–10

Dear Sir,

I am receipt of your letter of the 19th December which I have read with care and interest. I have been taking interest in Kashmir affairs for several years and I have followed recent events there. I have read most of the relevant statements that have been issued, including those written by Professor Gulshan Rai². I have no desire to express opinions about matters with which I am insufficiently acquainted. But there are certain general principles applicable to all states in India, big or small. They apply to Kashmir as well as to Hyderabad.

I am afraid that your letter does not keep these principles in view. Professor Gulshan Rai's articles seem to me in conflict with them also and I found it impossible to agree with his conclusions, quite apart from what the facts might be.

It is quite clear to me that the time has come when the ideal of full responsible government must be accepted by every state and immediate steps should be taken towards this end. I quite understand that these steps might vary in regard to particular states concerned, but they must be substantial steps.

I must condemn all attempts at violence and hooliganism by whomsoever committed and, if any printed posters have been issued as incitement to violence, I should be glad to see them.

The present position is that the state government has applied ordinances³ which can only be described as monstrous. Any government which uses such measures cannot claim the slightest indulgence. Further, a larger number of people are in prison for political purposes.

I think it is correct to say that the popular movement in Kashmir was communal in its origin. I think it has undergone some change and it is definitely seeking a wider platform. But even if it was communal, it would not take away from the rightness of the demand made by it. The fact that few Hindus have joined it does not rebound to their credit or to their wisdom. By this communal policy the Hindus would injure themselves more than anyone else. The point is that a demand, if it is right, must be accepted whosoever makes it, and in a state like Kashmir, a popular movement must inevitably be predominantly Muslim just as in Hyderabad, a popular movement must largely be Hindu. It is curious that in both these states the popular movements are dubbed communal by the governments. The right way to strengthen nationalism in Kashmir is for the Hindus to ally themselves fully with the popular movement and to seek to remove all blemishes from it.

Everyone must realise that the states are going to have responsible government. If so, the obvious course for minorities, even in order to protect themselves, is to line up with the popular movement.

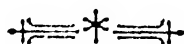
I would very much like to visit Kashmir myself, and I may do so in the future when an opportunity offers itself.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

¹ Gangaram Wazir (1883–1969); served the Jammu and Kashmir Government in various capacities; President, Dogra Sabha, Jammu, for many years

² Professor Gulshan Rai, a journalist of Lahore.

³ An ordinance, first enacted for a few days on 24 September 1931 to enforce martial law, was again promulgated on 1 June 1933 to suppress the popular movement. It vested the police with wide powers.



4. Congress and Ahrar Propaganda in Jammu and Kashmir State

Extracts from the Jammu and Kashmir Police Abstract, 7 January 1939, Crown Representative Records, Microfilm Roll No. 287, NAI

7 January 1939

The Abdullites were engaged in nominating candidates from the constituencies declared vacant owing to the imprisonment of certain Praja Sabha Seats.

On the 1st January Shamboo Nath Kaul and Mohammad Shafi left for Lahore with such papers as Ghulam Mohammad Bakshi¹ had asked for. These papers consisted of copies of the demands made by the Muslim agitators from 1931 to the present time, statements issued by Mohammad Abdullah Shaikh regarding the movement for the establishment of a responsible government etc. These papers have probably been taken for being shown to the AISPC and the Indian National Congress leaders. Shamboo Nath Kaul and Mohammad Shafi have further an idea to engage a larger number of Kashmiri Pandit cooks and Kashmiri Muslim labourers who are already at Lahore for attending the meeting of the AISPC at Ludhiana. They would thus impress upon the organizers of the Conference that they were united in their demand for responsible government.

Srinagar: On the 30th December, about 15 Muslims met and formed a new association which they named as the 'Socialist Conference'. This organisation will work within the Muslim Conference as long as it is not transformed into a National Conference and afterwards it will take the place of the Muslim Conference, to look after the communal interests of the Muslims. The gathering also passed resolutions supporting the demand for responsible government and expressing sympathy with those who had courted imprisonment during the agitation.

¹ Ghulam Mohammad Bakshi, (b. 1907); began his career as a school teacher; served All India Spinners Association; courted imprisonment in Kashmir; worked underground in the movement for Responsible Government in Kashmir, 1938; played an active part in the Quit Kashmir Movement; organised peace bridges and border scouts in Kashmir during the tribal raids of 1947; Deputy Prime Minister until 1953; re-elected leader of the National Conference Party in 1957; Prime Minister, Jammu and Kashmir 1953-63.

5. Political Meetings in Kashmir

Fortnightly Report, Kashmir, first half of January 1939, p. 22, File No. 40(15)-P/1939 (Political Department), NAI

Meetings of Muslims continue to be held at Srinagar, Sapore and Jammu, at intervals, which are addressed by supporters of the interneers, exhorting the audience to continue the struggle for attaining freedom, but none of these are of any great importance, the language used is picturesque and highly coloured but does not overstep the bounds of law.

6. Police Administration Report of Kashmir State

Tribune, 18 January 1939

Srinagar

16 January 1939

The Police Administration Report for the year 1939 observed:

'The promulgation of the new constitution in British India has created a new ambition in the minds of a few Abdullites who have since been trying to find out means to secure ministership in the States for themselves. They have, therefore, been instilling in the minds of the Mohammadans that the revision of the present constitution of the Praja Sabha and the grant of what they like to call "Independent Assembly" is the only panacea for all their supposed troubles. They have also been trying to give a nationalistic appearance to their demand and had offered to the Hindus to abide by the decision of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru in regard to the question of safeguards for minorities, in case they also joined hands with them. Their plea, urged in this connection, however, carry no force with the Hindus who sniff Pan-Islamic ideas underlying the movement. Even the Muslim masses have not yet evinced any interest in the movement as they feel that similar promises were held out to incite them during the disturbances of 1931, turned out only delusive and were designed to benefit the few educated leaders in the matter of getting services. The Mir Waiz' party of Muslim is deadly opposed to this movement, as they regard the capture of power by the Abdullites to be harmful to their interest.'

Reviewing the political agitation in the State during the last year the Report further says:

'Unlike its two predecessors, the year under review was chequered with abnormal happenings of communal nature. The special feature of the year was a sustained agitation for about two months launched by the Hindus and Sikhs of the Jammu Province, which they were pleased to term as cow protection movement. The agitation infected the whole province and imposed excessive strain on the Jammu Police. In Kashmir Province too, there was a similar agitation for some time. The agitation was likely to result in communal clashes between Hindus and Muslims but the Police admirably controlled the situation and brought home to the malcontents that their efforts to cause breaches of peace would always be curbed.'

Reviewing the Report the Government observe as follows:

'In Kashmir, the antagonistic parties amongst the Muslims have been struggling for political supremacy. Early in January 1937, the feud reached the breaking point on the occasion of Municipal elections in Srinagar and resulted in minor clashes and few arrests. Later in February, on the acquittal of the Hindu accused in the Mattan Riot Case,² certain portions of the judgment were misinterpreted and the masses were excited. In April, the decision in a contempt of court case in which the Muslims had refused to produce the minor children of a new convert to Islam before the Sessions Court provided the party of Shaikh Mohammad Abdullah with an opportunity for anti-Hindu and seditious speeches in Jammu. In May, inflammatory speeches had their effect in an ebullition which broke out there in June on an excuse of alleged insult to the Quran by the Superintendent of Jail. Prompt action by the local authorities and the dispatch of Military allayed the situation. Meanwhile the Mirwaiz Party took objection to the speech said to have been delivered by the President, Sanatan Dharma Youngmen's Association, to the effect that he had same veneration for the cow as the Muslims had for the Prophet. On the 13th June, they took out a procession and paraded the streets hurling abuses on the Hindus. Eighteen men were arrested and the processions were banned under Section 144, CrPC. On the insistence of the followers of the Mir Waiz to take out a procession and on its being stopped by the Police, the latter were charged with stones and brick-bats. Lathi charge having failed, twenty three rounds had to be fired to check the ferocity of the mob. The clashes resulted in injuries to 86 Policemen and 93 of the rioters. Mir Waiz and some other leaders were arrested.'

'The speeches of some of the Muslim agitators urging a reduction in the punishment prescribed by the panel clause relating to cow slaughter gave an opportunity to interested persons to exploit the judgment in the case "State versus Imam Din," in which the High Court had remarked that the offence, having been committed during night, was not designed to wound anybody's religious feelings. The people were led to believe that the judgment was an indication to change the law

relating to cow slaughter. The agitation was led by the Hindu-Sikh Nawjawan Sabha and had many sympathizers from outside the State. The Hartal in Jammu as also in other places in the Province was observed for over one month. On the 3rd August, Section 144, was promulgated but processions continued to be the features of protest demonstrations. In a few days the movement spread over the Jammu Province and Jathas were sent out to court arrests. The processionists when ordered to disperse usually squatted on the road. Total number of arrests was 360. On the 27th September a general amnesty was granted by His Highness to the prisoners arrested during agitations of the Hindus and the Muslims in the two Provinces. This gracious act was universally extolled and removed any misapprehension that still lurked in the minds of some people regarding the law relating to cow slaughter.'

¹ Yusuf Shah Mir Waiz (b. 1895) had the title of Head Preacher at the Friday prayers, educated at the Anglo-Oriental School, Kashmir and the Dar-ul-ulum in Deoband, became Mir Waiz of Srinagar Friday Mosque; sided with revolutionaries of Kashmir under the banner of All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference against Raja of Kashmir, Non-official member of grievances enquiry committee; in 1939 the All Jammu and Kashmir Conference changed its name to National Conference; Mir Waiz took exception and abandoned Muslim Conference.

² Mattan Riot Case—Disputes broke out between Hindus and Muslims in Mattan of Islamabad district in 1937. A commission was appointed to settle the dispute. One of the members was Shiv Narayan Fotedar

7. States People's Conference:

Is Srinagar Branch a non-communal body?

Tribune, 30 January 1939

Srinagar

28 January 1939

Doubts have again been created among the minorities regarding the working of the Srinagar Branch of the All India States People's Conference. The present General Secretary of the Conference continues to be the Acting President of the Muslim Conference. Large number of members also continue to be on the Muslim Conference. This has created doubts among the minority communities that the Srinagar Branch of the States' People's Conference is not a non-communal body. It is also understood that except those, who are attending the Ludhiana Conference as delegates of the Srinagar Branch, the representative Minority Associations are not sending their members to the Ludhiana Conference....

8. Fortnightly Report on Kashmir State for second half of January 1939

History of Freedom Movement Unit, File No. 80/3R V, Set No. XI, NAI

The Srinagar Branch of the All India States People's Conference has been informed that according to its population, this State should enlist 3800 members and send 36 delegates to the Ludhiana Session of the State People's Conference. Letters have been issued to various towns to enlist members.

The Abdullites claim that the date of the Ludhiana Conference has been changed so as to enable Shaikh Abdullah to attend it after his release from Jail.

There are vague rumours of trouble in the Kathua Jail where Shaikh Abdullah is interned. It is now almost common knowledge that a large part of the Jail staff have been summarily dismissed for gross laxity in jail discipline. It appears that Shaikh Abdullah had been permitted to correspond with, and even met his political friends. It is also said that he was allowed to 'dine out'.

9. G.M. Bakshi to Lala Achhint Ram, 12 February 1939

AISPC Papers, File No. 198, NMML

My dear Lala Ji,

I am sending the enclosed resolution which we propose to move in the All India States People's Conference at Ludhiana. Please forward them to the drafting Committee and oblige.

With regards

Yours sincerely,
G.M. Bakshi

Enclosure: 1

'The All India State people's Conference, after a close scrutiny of the so-called reforms announced by His Highness the Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir on February 11, 1939 completely rejects the proposals as worthless. The Reforms do not touch the fringe of the political problems in the State and do not mark a step forward.'

Mover: G.M. Bakshi

Seconder: Sir Kaul.

10. New Constitutional Reforms in Kashmir

Article by Prof. Gulshan Rai, *Tribune*, 18 February 1939

18 February 1939

The existing constitution in Kashmir State is based on the Report of the Kashmir Constitutional Reforms Conference presided over by Mr B.J. Glancy.¹ The recommendations of this Conference were accepted by His Highness on 31st May 1932 and a Franchise Committee, with Sir Barjor Dalal² as Chairman, was appointed to settle the qualifications of voters. The voters' qualifications as fixed by this Committee were very much lower than what at the time existed in the British territory of the Punjab. It is interesting to note that the Kashmir rules require a literacy test from a candidate who stands for election. This is not so in the Punjab. Under these proposals the State Legislature was to consist of two kinds of members, viz., the Sabhasads and the State Councillors. There are at the present moment 59 Sahbasads, and 16 State Councillors. Out of the 59 Sabhasads, 33 are elected from the various constituencies. 14 are nominated non-officials to represent such interests as cannot come in through election, and 12 are officials including the ministers. Among the Sabhasads therefore there is already a majority of elected members. The 16 State Councillors are supposed to be eminent persons in the State summoned by name by His Highness the Maharaja. In this way the total strength of the State Legislature is 75. It was originally intended that the State Councillors would form a nucleus of the future second chamber, when on the grant of more extended and responsible powers to the legislature, it would be decided to establish an Upper House. The new proclamation that has been issued by His Highness the Maharaja provides for the election of 7 out of 16 eminent persons in the State. These seven are to represent Tazimi Sardars, Jagirdars, big landlords, and retired officers enjoying a pension of more than Rs 100 per mensem. The remaining nine State Councillors will continue to be summoned by name by His Highness the Maharaja. In this way the total strength of the elected element has been increased from 33 to 40 in a House of 75. There will in future be an elected majority in the State Legislature.

Old and New Constitution

Next we come to the functions of the State Legislature. Under the existing constitution, the Praja Sabha possesses the power to make Regulations (or laws) for all persons, for all courts, and for all places and things, within the State. But in cases of emergency or where immediate legislation is required in any matter affecting the peace and good government of the State, the Council of Ministers can submit to His Highness an Ordinance, which, when approved by him, has the force of law for a period not exceeding six months. Bills can under this Constitution be promoted not only by Government members but also by private non-official members as well. These powers are quite on a par with what are possessed by legislative bodies in British India. Like British Legislative bodies the Kashmir State Assembly does not possess the power to change the Regulation under which the existing Constitution has been established. It cannot also repeal or alter any law made by the Council of Ministers with regard to Public Debt. The Praja Sabha at the present moment possesses no power to amend or alter 'any Regulation concerning Public Revenues of the State including the imposition of any charge thereon, or the maintenance, alteration, or imposition, of any tax or duty'. Under the existing Constitution all new proposals of the Cabinet with regard to taxation are placed before the Praja Sabha for discussion. If, they pass any resolutions on these proposals, they are considered by the Council of Ministers. But the actual responsibility for money bills is with the Executive and not with the legislature. This has now been changed by the new proclamation of His Highness the Maharaja. He directs that, in modification of the existing provisions, legislation regarding taxes, as distinguished from fees and penalties, should in future be passed by the Praja Sabha.

Under the existing constitution a copy of the detailed statement of the estimated annual Revenue and Expenditure of the State and the ilaqas exercising civil and criminal jurisdiction, is laid on the table of the Praja Sabha on the first day of the session to be held in each year in the month of October. The members of the Praja Sabha can ask questions or move resolutions regarding any appropriation of revenues or money proposed in the statements. If such resolutions are passed the Praja Sabha is informed what action is taken on them by the Council of Ministers, before the budget is actually passed, by it. The new proclamation increases the powers of the State legislature in this respect also. In future the appropriations of the revenues, which are votable, will be submitted to the Praja Sabha in the form of regular demands, as is now the case in legislative bodies in British India. It will in future be open to the Praja Sabha to assent or refuse its assent to any such demand or reduce the amount under it. It is thus evident that under the new reforms, the Kashmir legislature will possess to some extent power over the public purse. That I think is a considerable advance. If the existing constitution is on a par with our Morley Reforms in the British territory, the new reforms are on a par with the Montague reforms.

In addition to the legislative and taxation powers that the Kashmir Praja Sabha will now possess, the members at the present moment possess the power to move resolutions, and ask questions regarding different aspects of the administration. They also possess the power to move adjournments, which it was not within the power of members of the British Indian Legislative bodies of the Montague Reforms type to do. From this it would be evident that the powers of the Kashmir Legislature are not much different from the powers of the British Indian Legislative bodies under the Montague Reforms.

The new proclamation does one other thing which does not exist in the present constitution. So far the members of the State Legislature have been associated with the Executive administration of the State to a very small extent. At the present moment there exist five Standing Committees of the Praja Sabha. They are for Finance, Industries, Public Health, Education, and the fifth for Agriculture, Forests, and Co-operation. All the members of these Standing Committees with the

exception of the minister in charge who is the chairman, are non-official members of the Sabha, elected by its non-official members according to the principle of proportional representation by the method of single transferable vote. These Standing Committees are elected at the commencement of each financial year and it is their function to advise the departments concerned in such matters as may be referred to them for opinion. This gives to the members of these Standing Committees an insight into the working of the administration. Under the new proclamation this association of the representatives of the people with the Executive is still further increased. There will now be a number of parliamentary undersecretaries appointed by the Maharaja, from among the non-official members of the legislature, and they will be paid a suitable honorarium. Their function would be to assist the Ministers in their parliamentary work. That is bound to give them some training in the work of the administration. It will also satisfy the ambition of some legislators.

So far the Kashmir Legislature has an official President, as was the case in British India for first four years of the Montague Reforms. At the present moment one of the judges of the High Court is the President of the Praja Sabha. There is no Deputy President so far. The new proclamation provides for the appointment of a non-official Deputy President, who will be elected by the members of the Sabha. He will also be paid a suitable honorarium. This is a step in the direction of having a non-official elected President of the House.

We must remember that the present Constitution is only 7 years old, and so far there have been only two general elections under this Constitution. The people of Kashmir State are fortunate, inasmuch as they have taken another step in advance much earlier, than it has been the case with their brethren in British India.

¹ J.B. Glancy (b. 1882); British Officer from Political Department of Government of India; Finance Member of Cabinet of Kashmir, appointed on 12 November 1931 to preside over the Commission of Enquiry for formulating the proposal to meet the grievances of the Muslim Subjects and other Communities as well; officiating Resident, Punjab 1932, Resident and AGG, Central India, 1933; Governor of Punjab, 1941.

² Sir Barjor Dalal, a judge of the High Court; Chairman of the Commission of Inquiry into Jail Firing in 1931

11. Jawaharlal Nehru on Conditions in Kashmir State

SWJN, Vol. 9, p. 434

25 February 1939

I have only just seen a communique¹ issued by the Jammu and Kashmir Government purporting to reply to certain remarks I made at Ludhiana. I had stated that notification 19-L was 'monstrous' and that it still functions. I am told it is not used in normal times and that it was not even used to put down serious communal disturbances. I entirely agree. It is not used for murderers, thieves, kidnappers, dacoits, brigands, cut-throats or other criminals and scoundrels who are tried by the ordinary law of the land. It has not been used for communal fanatics even when they stab and kill. But when political workers, desiring political change, raise their heads then it is used and has been barbarously used and presumably will be used, or else the Kashmir Government would not keep it on. A law functions so long as it is on the statute book. Notification 19-L is on the statute book and was used recently enough. The penal code provides for the punishment of hanging for murderers. It is not necessary for a continuous series of hangings to take place in order to demonstrate that the penal code is still functioning. I repeat that Notification 19-L is a monstrous imposition. It is bad enough that a government should father such a monstrosity, it is worse that it should have the temerity to justify it.

The Kashmir Government states that that civil resisters had forfeited all public sympathy. I cannot obviously speak from personal knowledge. But I should have thought that recent events proved the contrary. Seven members of the assembly were arrested because of their association with the agitation for responsible government. This led to seven vacancies and seven bye-elections. In every one of these bye-elections the party of the civil resisters won. In any event if the Kashmir Government is so certain of public support why not remove notification 19-L and put an end to the Seditious Meetings Act²? Why not have a plebiscite?

¹ The Communiqué of 25 February 1939 contended that ordinances were never used in normal times and as soon as the emergency disappeared, even the limited enforcement of certain laws was given up.

² The Seditious Meetings Act is a regulation for the prevention of seditious meetings passed on 10 September 1914, related to the prevention of public meetings likely to promote sedition or to cause a disturbance

12. Kashmir Reforms is Inadequate

Bombay Chronicle, 15 March 1939

15 March 1939

'Our chief object is to impress on the people in British India to cease thinking in terms of a Hindu Ruler or a Muslim Ruler. The religion of the Ruler does not matter at all. In fact the struggle in the States is not directed against the Rulers as such; but the struggle is intended to win civil liberties and to establish our claim for Responsible Government.'

This was the remark made by Shaikh Mohammad Abdullah, President of the Kashmir branch of the Indian State People's Conference and a member of the Standing Committee of the All India States People's Conference in the course of an interview with a representative of the '*Bombay Chronicle*'.

All India Tour Planned

Shaikh Mohamed Abdullah accompanied by Pandit Kashyap Bandhu, Mr G.M. Bakshi and Pandit P.N. Bajaj have come down from the Himalayan snows of Kashmir to the plains of India to clear the misunderstandings arising out of the great campaign of misrepresentation that has been carried on against the movement in the State. They went to Tripuri and met all the National leaders. From Bombay they will go to Calcutta and Allahabad and other prominent places in the country to explain their view point.

In the course of their interview with a representative of this paper they drew a vivid picture of the political and economic conditions of the people of Kashmir and explained the genesis and objects of the National movement in the State.

Pure Personal Rule

They pointed out that the administration was purely a form of personal rule. The Executive Council was responsible only to the Maharaja and ruled by the authority of his commands. There was, of course, a Legislative Assembly. It consisted of 33 elected members and 42 official and nominated members. The people's representatives could never get any majority and even if they did pass any resolution by a majority it was not binding on the Government. Barring the powers of discussion the Assembly had no other power.

The economic condition of the people was utterly miserable. The State had an annual revenue of Rs 2,47,00,000. Out of this amount 32 lakhs were derived from customs, 62 lakhs from land revenue and 42 lakhs from the forests. The customs revenue was ultimately borne by the consumer.

The land revenue rate was double than that prevalent in Punjab. The incidence of taxation fell heavily on the poorest classes of people.

Of the 36 lakhs of people in Kashmir 95 per cent were agriculturists. The per capita income of the agriculturists has been calculated at less than one rupee per month. The 'Land of Paradise' was inhabited by some of the poorest people in the world.

22 per cent for Ruler

Of the total income of the State nearly 22 per cent was taken by the ruler in one form or another; whereas hardly ten per cent was spent on education, 19 per cent of the revenue was spent on the State forces whereas only 3.5 per cent was spent on medical help. The literacy figure were miserably poor being 7 per cent for the males and 6 per cent for females. There were only 75 dispensaries in the whole of Kashmir and Jammu.

As for civil liberties, they pointed out the obnoxious 'Notification 19-L' under which the police could arrest and imprison anybody without any trial whatsoever. No newspaper could dare criticize the Government and live. There were just one Urdu daily and half a dozen weeklies, including one in English but they had a very small circulation and were merely Government organs. Recently the Government had suppressed 'the *Hamdard*' and 'the *Kesari*', two nationalist weeklies and thrown everybody connected with the papers from the Editors to the hawkers in prison.

People's Assembly

There was a Muslim Conference in the State which was functioning for the last eight years. It had recently been nationalized. The Working Committee had already resolved to throw open the membership to all castes and creeds.

Affected by the time spirit and the progress of British Indian Provinces, the leaders of the State formulated a national demand and wanted to start an organisation on the basis of these demands. The national demand asked for the establishment of a system of administration responsible to a legislature elected on the basis of joint-electoralates with reservation of seats to the minorities. It also asked for the safeguarding of the fundamental civil rights of the people.

As soon as this National demand had been formulated and published all the signatories to the Demand were imprisoned under Notification 19-L. That was on October 29, 1938. That was the signal for starting a general civil disobedience movement which resulted in the arrest of 1,000 persons in one month before the movement was suspended in the first week of November on the advice of Mahatma Gandhi and other British Indian leaders. If the list of persons who went to prison were scanned it would be seen that all communities had made their contribution.

Inadequate Reforms

They referred to the announcement made recently by His Highness the Maharaja inaugurating certain reforms in the State. These new reforms were utterly inadequate. All that it did was to throw open seven more of the nominated seats for election. But even these were to be elected by jagirdars, pensioners and other vested interests.

The States' People's Conference at Ludhiana passed a resolution condemning the reforms as unsatisfactory.

The immediate programme of work that the States' People's Conference has set before itself is to organise and strengthen the Conference and also to carry on the work of rehabilitating village industries. They propose to await developments and act on the advice of Mahatma Gandhi and other leaders.

13. Kashmir cannot be Crushed

Article by Prem Nath Bazaz, *Congress Socialist*, 26 March 1939

26 March 1939

What has happened to the popular movement in the Kashmir State? Is it a Communal movement? Can economic and political demand ever obliterate Communal differences?

These are some of the questions that Sri Prem Nath Bazaz, leader of the Kashmir States' People, answers in this article.

The recent political movement in Kashmir was not started after deliberation or with any pre-conceived plan of agitation. It was thrust upon the people by the irresponsible Government of the State with an idea to crush the national solidarity of those who were then making efforts to voice their feelings from a joint platform and without any distinction of creed or caste. Every one knows that there is great political unrest in Kashmir since 1931. But while we inside are conscious of the fact that this unrest is born out of the economic distress of the people, those outside, misled by the mischievous propaganda of the powers that be, think, that the two communities are warring with each other. After having thrown about a thousand brave workers into prison on mere suspicion and in most cases without trial in the recent movement the Government of the State told the outside world that it was quite inside.

Curiously enough though popular leaders of all the communities had been arrested for demanding Responsible Government in the State, the authorities were not ashamed to say that the trouble was communal and the demand was made only by Muslims.

But how long could Truth be suppressed? How long could the roused consciousness of the people prepared to suffer be ignored?

For some time it might have been possible to deceive the outsiders. But before long it became evident that the policy of repression could not succeed and was doomed to fail in the long run. As announcement granting further reforms, which are no reforms as we shall presently see, was made in which the very people whom the Government called 'goondas' and disturbers of peace were extolled and their services to the country recognised.

Government Nervous

The truth is that the Kashmir Government is daily becoming nervous about the struggle looming ahead. They do not like the efforts of the leaders to organise the people on a common platform and on non-communal basis. They are mostly afraid of the economic slogans that are being raised in political meetings now in place of religious slogans raised before. When last year signs were apparent that the Muslims and Pandits of Kashmir were joining hands together for the common cause of liberating their mother land severe and monstrous methods were adopted to crush the movement. Although the leaders avoided clash in every way possible the authorities provoked them and by serving disgraceful orders on various leaders to execute bonds of good behaviour challenged them. They had no choice but to accept the challenge. They fought a battle and have emerged triumphant as for the first time in the history of the country Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs have gone to jails suffered immensely for the common cause of the demand of responsible Government in the State.

The reforms granted by the Maharaja are going to satisfy nobody in the State. The much boasted elected majority is a mere deception as the creation of the constituencies of such vested interests as Zamindars, Landlords, Pensioners and Tazimi Sirdars for the first time, is a retrograde step rather than an improvement on the existing conditions. The power still vests in the council of ministers who continue to be as irresponsible as before. The appointment of Under-Secretaries

from the non-official members may mean small allowances for certain hench men of the Government but it will not help the famished people in any way. It is for reasons like these that the Nationalist Party has rejected these reforms.

National Demand

Our path is clear. Before going to the prison we had formulated a National Demand envisaging our immediate objective. In it we had asked for what would have satisfied the least ambitious amongst us. The moderates in our party had signed it without any hesitation. This document was signed when we did not know how the country would respond to our call and how the different communities who did not know how to act jointly till then, would behave in a National fight. We were not organised fully then and were not prepared for a fight. Much water has now passed beneath bridges since then. We know now our strength as also how the people responded. We can in no way therefore accept anything less than is contained in the National Demand. Indeed there are members of our party who think that the document is old history by this time and should be replaced by a fresh demand.

Kashmir politics is uncertain at present. On our part we are still very anxious to organise ourselves and spread the branches of our conference to each and every village. We want to prepare ourselves for a fight and fully equip the people for this great struggle. If the Government is farsighted enough to learn a lesson from the recent movement it will be wisely counseled to grant the modest demand contained in the document above referred to. Otherwise any man who runs can see that there can be no calm in the state as the wretched poverty of the people which is in striking contrast to the luxurious surroundings of lavish nature has forced them to no more tolerate the system of Government that is the cause of this all.

14. Muslim League should leave Kashmir Muslims alone:

Shaikh Abdullah's speech

Shaikh Abdullah's speech at Lahore, *Tribune*, 5 April 1939

Lahore
4 April 1939.

'The struggle in the States is not so much against the Princes as against the Political Department of the Government of India and against British Imperialism' declared Sheikh Abdullah a nationalist of Kashmir while presiding over a meeting last night at Lahore. The meeting was convened by the Punjab Riyasti Praja Mandal (Punjab State People's Conference) in the gardens, outside Mori Gate in order to explain the significance of the People's movement now going on in the Punjab States.

The meeting was addressed by some prominent Congressmen, including Dr Satyapal, MLA, S. Sardul Singh Caveeshar, S. Kishen Singh,¹ MLA, L. Achint Ram and Pandit Sant Ram.²

Among the other speakers were representatives of the subjects of the various States. Mr Jia Lal Kila, Advocate (Kashmir), S. Bhagwan Singh Longowalia³ (Patiala), S. Hira Singh (Nabha),⁴ S. Atma Singh (Kalsia), Comrade Hans Raj (Jind) and one gentleman belonging to Kapurthala State addressed the meeting. Shaikh Abdullah, Mr Jia Lal and other speakers who expressed their faith in Mahatma Gandhiji's methods, declared unequivocally that 'they were not struggling to put an end to the Princely order but their sole aim was to have responsible forms of government established in all the States and let the Princes become constitutional rulers.

S. Bhagwan Singh Longawalia, who was once sentenced to 44 years' term of imprisonment in the Patiala State and came out after serving 12 years, said, 'It is wrong to say that we are rebels against the Princes. No. The charge lies in the fact at their door. It is they who are depriving us of our legitimate rights.'

Shaikh Abdullah made a vigorous speech. He gave an account of the appalling poverty in Kashmir and other States. He made an appeal to the Punjab Congress leaders to set their politics right. That was the best help they could render to the State subjects. The state of affairs in the Punjab affected them badly.

The State subjects formed the second wheel of the Chariot of India's freedom and unless they were strengthened the chariot would not go ahead. He was glad to be able to say that the struggle for Independence that was going on in India had caught the imagination of the State subjects too and today there could be seen a new wave of enthusiasm and love for liberty among them also. The State subjects were second to none in their love for liberty. He, however, hoped that the people outside would give them their moral support. They needed no other outside support.

Attitude towards Muslim League

Shaikh Abdullah availed of the opportunity to answer some of the critics and remove certain misrepresentations made by the communal propagandists. He said that being the men at the spot he knew much better about the men and matters of the Kashmir State and suggested that the Muslim League would better leave the Kashmir Muslims alone. They knew their needs and were aware of the circumstances and conditions around them. He was sorry to have to say that attempts were being made to discredit him by calling him a *Mirzai*—which he was not—and sometimes by calling him a *Kafir*. He, however, wanted to assure everybody that he did not care for those ill-founded mis-statements. He asked Mr Jinnah and his Muslim League, 'How can we tie ourselves to you? You are the people who in a resolution at Patna, threatened to create difficulties for the Congress if that organisation of the masses interfered in the affairs of the States. While we were in great distress, the Congress came to our rescue. It was the Congress, which voiced our grievances and supported us. Maulana Zafar Ali¹ has in a speech at Kapurthala declared that the Congress is an enemy of the Princes and they in the League are their friends and protectors. If that is right, let me say clearly that we cannot be with those who want the present state of affairs to continue.'

Defending his own and the attitude of his party in trying to win the support and sympathies of the Hindus in Kashmir, Shaikh Abdullah said: 'There is not much difference in the position as it exists in British India and Kashmir State. The Muslim League here, as represented by Mr Jinnah, demands that for the purpose of achieving Independence the majority community must win the confidence of the minority—the Muslims. Will anybody tell me, how am I wrong, representing a majority community as I do, in trying to win the confidence of the minority community which happens to be the Hindus, the Sikhs and others in Kashmir? May I know what irreligious act am I committing in trying to take the minorities with me to have Self-Government for the people? Is it not absurd that what is right here becomes wrong in the case of Kashmir?'

Concluding Shaikh Abdullah said that they would stand shoulder to shoulder with the people in British India in their struggle against the imposition of Federation. He appealed for help from the Punjab Press. The meeting then terminated after 11 a.m.

¹ S. Kishen Singh, d. 1951; father of famous martyr Bhagat Singh; educated in San Dass Anglo Sanskrit High School at Jullunder; Started working for Arya Samaj; took active part in agrarian agitation in Punjab in 1906-07; opposed the government on the Canal Act; arrested in 1907 and released in 1909; in person, he organised agitation for jail reform; helped Ghadar party; united farmers under Zamindara League; was severely beaten by the police during civil disobedience movement; elected to Punjab Legislative Assembly in 1938; Founder of paper called *Sahauk*.

² Pandit Sant Ram, b. 1889; education: Government High School Kasur; from 1914 in thick of freedom struggle; Member, Reception Committee, INC, 1919; General Secretary, Amritsar City Congress Committee; imprisoned during Non-cooperation movement; General Secretary, of 1st War Council organised in 1930; elected to Punjab Legislative Assembly, 1937; imprisoned from 1940–41; returned to Punjab Assembly on Congress ticket.

³ Bhagwan Singh Longowalia was born at Longowal in Patiala State; joined Akali agitation for Gurdwara reform in 1922; imprisoned in 1922 for 2 years; Founder Member, Praja Mandal of Punjab States; chief spirit behind memorial to Viceroy narrating misdeeds of Maharaja Patiala, copy of memorial to Bombay session AISP in 1929; General Secretary of Punjab Praja Mandal; imprisoned in 1934 and released in 1935; parted company with Akali, joined Hindu Urban Intelligence in Punjab; died in 1944.

⁴ Hira Singh Bhatwal, b. 1899 in Nabha State; joined Army as sepoy, but dismissed in 1919 from military on account of undesirable activities; attended annual session of Central Sikh League, 1920; arrested in Nabha while participating in non cooperation movement; shifted activity to Patiala; arrested in 1946 during satyagraha in Nabha; 1952, won an election from Sherpur Constituency

⁵ Maulana Zafar Ali Khan, 1873–1956; educated at Mission High School, Wazirabad; Mahindra Singh College, Patiala; later joined MAO College, Aligarh; Secretary to Nawab Mohsinul Mulk for some time; took over as Editor of his father's paper '*Zamindar*' in 1909; close associate of Mohammad Ali; did not agree with Khilafat leaders to reject Nehru Report; left Congress in 1932; Member Central Legislative Assembly, 1937–45; supported Muslim League and Pakistan.

15. Rebuke to the Muslim League

Editorial, *Tribune*, 6 April 1939

6 April 1939

However opinion may differ regarding affairs in Kashmir State, we feel no hesitation in saying that Sheikh Abdullah rendered a valuable service both to his community and the cause he represents and to the country generally by administering to the Muslim League the severe rebuke he did in a public speech at Lahore on Tuesday last. While asking Mr Jinnah and the Muslim League to leave the Kashmir Muslims alone, he said: 'How can we tie ourselves to you? You are the people who in a resolution at Patna threatened to create difficulties for the Congress if that organisation of the masses interfered in the affairs of the States. While we were in great distress the Congress came to our rescue. It was the Congress which voiced our grievances and supported us. Maulana Zafar Ali has in a speech at Kapurthala declared that the Congress is an enemy of the Princes and that they in the League are their friends and protectors. If that is so, let me say clearly that we cannot be with those who want the present affairs in the States to continue.'

Sheikh Abdullah is forgetting one important fact. While the Congress follows a uniform policy with regard to all States, the Muslim League and Muslim communalists are not the friends and protectors of all Princes, but only of Muslim Princes. They have not the smallest objection, for instance, to Sheikh Abdullah and the majority community in Kashmir creating any amount of trouble for the Maharaja of Kashmir, but they will not allow any such thing to be done at the other end of India in the Hyderabad State. In that State things must continue as they are, no matter how indefensible they are in themselves and irrespective of what the majority community demands. So far as Kashmir itself is concerned what has, it appears, given dire offence to the Muslim League is the attempt which Sheikh Abdullah and his party have of late been making to carry at least a section of the minority community with them. Sheikh Abdullah's reply to the League on this point is absolutely conclusive. 'There is not much difference,' he says, 'between the position in British India and in Kashmir State. The Muslim League, as represented by Mr Jinnah, demands that for the purpose of achieving independence the majority community must win the confidence of the minority—the Muslims. Will anybody tell me how I am wrong, representing the majority community as I do, in trying to win the confidence of the minority communities in Kashmir? Is it not absurd that what is right here becomes wrong in the case of Kashmir?'

Of course, it is absurd. But does not this absurdity vitiate the entire outlook of the Muslim League? Is not their whole policy summed up in the words 'Heads I win, tails you lose'? If you are the majority, and we are the minority, you must win our confidence, otherwise you do not deserve political power and shall not have it, so far as it rests with us to prevent you from having it. But if we are the majority and you the minority, we must rule you by virtue of our numerical predominance, for democracy means government by a majority. Again, if we are in a minority, you must not only give us representation in the Legislatures and in public services in excess of our numerical proportion in the population, but must actually treat us as an equal, even though we may be eighty millions in a population of more than three hundred and fifty millions. But if you are in a minority you must not only have no weightage, but must in some cases actually forego a substantial part of the representation to which you are entitled on a population basis, and as for political power, how can you expect any power except such power as we choose out of our boundless generosity to give you ourselves? Let one go through the ponderous resolutions of the Muslim League at its annual sessions and then see for himself if this is not a correct statement of its general policy. Of course, this is not the view of the Muslim community as such, a large and growing part of which is as nationalistic in its attitude and outlook as any other community. But this part is treated by the League with the same undisguised hostility as the Congress.

16. S.M. Abdullah on Muslim League Policy Towards Indian States

Tribune, 19 May 1939

Srinagar
18 May 1939

'The resolutions passed at the annual meeting of the All India Muslim League at Patna and at its meeting held at Meerut clearly prove that the Muslim League is not prepared to help the eight crores of people living in the Indian States and that is why we in Kashmir, are following the programme of the Indian National Congress.' Says Mr S.M. Abdullah, the president of the Kashmir Muslim Conference, in a statement criticizing the policy of the Muslim League.

Mr Abdullah characterizes the policy of the Muslim League as harmful to the peoples of the Indian States and adds that the speeches made by Mr M.A. Jinnah at Sholapur and those made by Maulana Zafar Ali Khan at Kapurthala were a conclusive proof of the fact that the Muslim League wanted to maintain and support the reactionary and despotic spirit prevailing in the Indian States and would not like to see a change in the present position of the Princes. Instead of doing something to ameliorate the condition of the masses in the States the League has leveled a charge against the Congress that it wants to end the princely order. This charge is malicious. The Congress did not want to end the Princes, but it certainly wanted to end despotism prevailing in the States.

Explaining the position of the Kashmir Muslim Conference and the criticism against his policy, Mr Abdullah adds: 'Some Muslim friends have objected to our nationalization programme and ... that the Muslim majority in Kashmir should support the Muslim League. But they forget that the position of the Kashmir Muslim is the same as that of Hindu majority in British India. If the Muslim League wants the majority community to accept their reasonable demands before they join in the fight for freedom, should the Kashmir Muslims not follow the same principle'.

Concluding he says that those of the Kashmir Muslims who are opposing the lead given by the Muslim Conference to convert the body into National Conference, with a broader programme for all castes and communities living in the State, are blindly following the British Indian politics and he appeals to them to profit by the events in British India.

It will be recalled that Mr Jinnah in one of his recent speeches characterized the policy of Mr S.M. Abdullah as harmful to the Muslims of Kashmir and appealed to him to stick to his old programme.

17. Ghulam Bakshi to Rangildas Kapadia, 17 May 1939, NMML

AISPC Papers, Kashmir, File No. 93, 1938-39, NMML

My dear Kapadia Ji,

I have sent several letters to you but I regret I have received no reply from you so far.

I have always tried to keep you informed of all the developments and have sent you the copies of the circulars issued by the District Magistrate, but to my greatest surprise there has been not a word written or spoken against these. The pamphlet entitled 'Kashmir' and published by Balwant Rai Mehta¹ and also the special number of 'The States people' have been proscribed by the Kashmir Durbar. A copy of the order I am enclosing.

I am now enclosing herewith a short summary of the present situation in Kashmir and would be grateful if you would kindly effect its publication in your own way and also issue a statement commenting on it.

With best wishes.

Yours sincerely,
Ghulam Bakshi.

¹ Balwant Rai Mehta, 1899-1965; Studied in Alfred High School at Bhavnagar 1916, BA from Bombay University, but did not take degree; in the following year graduated from Gujarat Vidhyapith; adopted non violent method in his fight for democratic union in princely state of Bhavnagar; 1921, joined editorial board of the 'Saurashtra' a Gujarati weekly, championing cause of people in Princely India; 1923 helped to found Bhavnagar Praja Mandal, 1928-47, General Secretary, All India States People's Conference; 1930 Gandhi asked him to lead Salt Satyagraha; offered Individual Satyagraha in 1940; in 1946 joined Bhavnagar State Legislative Assembly as leader of opposition, 1948 appointed Prime Minister, 1952 elected to Lok Sabha; Chief Minister of Gujarat in 1963

18. Jawaharlal Nehru to G.M. Bakshi, 2 June 1939

SWJN, Vol. 9, pp. 440-41

My dear Bakshiji,

I have your letter of the 24th May¹. As far as I remember I replied to your previous letter and I certainly sent a reply to Sheikh Saheb. The information you had sent about the repression in Kashmir was sent on by our research bureau to the press and duly published. The research bureau is not supposed to issue comments as a rule and allows facts to speak for themselves. That is the right and dignified attitude for a research bureau. It was possible for me to issue a statement but, as I wrote to Sheikh Saheb, I was in a peculiar difficulty owing to various reasons and felt in no mood to issue statements of any kind. As you know what is happening in Kashmir is happening in a host of other states. Everywhere repression is in full swing and it is becoming urgently necessary for us to consider the whole situation. I dislike the idea of just protesting in a statement. At the same time I did not want to say anything which might conflict with Gandhiji's policy in regard to the states.

I can well appreciate what you tell me is happening in Kashmir. Exactly the same kind of thing is happening in many other places. It is very irritating and yet it is an inevitable development

which need not worry us greatly. Such things are signs of a growing national movement which frightens the government.

I think that the advice Sheikh Saheb has given you, not to defy the ban placed on you till the session of the National Conference² is over, is a sound advice. It is a hard pill to swallow but in the larger interest of the movement it is not worthwhile for you to defy the order at this stage.

It is proposed to have a meeting of the constitution committee of the States People's Conference here in Bombay about the 17th June. I hope that Sheikh Saheb will be able to come, though the distance is great.

Yours sincerely,
Jawaharlal Nehru

¹ He wrote about repression in Kashmir.

² In June 1939, the All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference changed its name to All Jammu and Kashmir National Conference. Its aim was achievement of representative government.

19. Shaikh Muhammad Abdullah to Jawaharlal Nehru

Jawaharlal Nehru Papers, File No. 103, P.1, subject file, Part II, NMML

7 June 1939.

Special session converting Muslim Conference into National Conference commences 10th June. Kindly wire message.

Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah

20. Jawaharlal Nehru's Greetings to the Kashmir National Conference

Telegram to Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah, Bombay, 8 June 1939, *SWJN*, Vol. 9, pp. 441

8 June 1939

I send greetings to your conference and trust that it will base itself on nationalism and help in bringing freedom to all people in Kashmir.

21. Plea for change of name of Muslim Conference

Khwaja Ghulam Mohammad Sadiq's Presidential Address at the Special Session of the Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference, *Tribune*, 12 June 1939

Srinagar
10 June 1939

'The people of Kashmir were not always slaves as they are now. There was a time when this Heavenly part of the globe was also commanding respect in the world by virtue of the learning, wealth and civilization, when even China and Tibet were under the suzerainty of Kashmir and when Kashmir was one of the biggest trading centers. The misfortunes of the people of Kashmir began with the internal disputes between the rulers when ultimately the Moghuls got possession of Kashmir. The Moghul Governors damped the spirit of the Kashmiris and forced them to live like dumb driven cattle. After them the Afghans, the Sikhs and the Dogras ended whatever "power"

still remained in the Kahmiris. The world believes; alas, that the Kashmiris will always remain a subject race. They are born slaves and they are destined to die as slaves.'

These observations were made by Khwaja Ghulam Mohammed Sadiq¹, in his presidential address to the Special Session of the Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference, which met today to consider the proposals regarding nationalization of Muslim politics in Kashmir.

He added:

The Kashmiris have lived four hundred years leaving their destinies to their fate. But fate has not been favourable to them. All that the Kashmiris want is that they should be given the power to make or mar their own fate. This is the revolution which is bound to come. As after the day, night is bound to come, so is revolution. The revolution I refer to is the attainment of responsible government under the aegis of His Highness the Maharaja Bahadur.

Responsible Government

'It is an admitted fact that Responsible Government in the State will not be the rule of any one class or community but all the 40 lakhs of peoples living in the State will equally share the Government of the country. It is, therefore, necessary that people belonging to all castes and communities should offer joint sacrifices for the attainment of the goal. Formation of a central non-communal body is the first rung in the ladder for the attainment of the goal. This step should have been taken eight years back and had it been so we would not have met today to put forward this demand but we would have met to decide the procedure of running that form of Government. Though we opened our eyes after eight years we even today find darkness around us and several difficulties in our way. Awakening came in Kashmir suddenly like an earth-quake. The public body which gave birth to the movement in Kashmir was the Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference which may rightly be called a "revolutionary body". It was the duty of the Conference to educate not only the Muslims but people of other communities also for the coming revolution.

'It is interesting to note that inspite of the communal spirit that prevailed, the Muslim Conference remained firm on its programme. The demands of the Muslims mainly contained such items as were common to all the communities. The Conference demanded proprietary rights for zamindars, liberty of Press and platform and a legislature. These can be the basic demands of every country. The Muslim Conference not only fought for these common demands but has always extended invitation to the other communities to join on a common platform.

Hindu-Muslim unity

'During the last eight years the Muslim Conference has, both in its resolutions and the addresses at its annual sessions, stressed upon the necessity at its annual sessions, of communal harmony. In 1933 the Muslim Conference appointed a sub-committee consisting of ten members to hold a joint Conference of the different communities in the State in order to find out ways and means whereby communal harmony could be attained. Though due to the repressive policy of the Government and other difficulties that arose the communities could not work, yet it had no adverse effect upon the policy of the Muslim Conference itself. Today's meeting is the result of the non-communal spirit underlying the work of the Muslim Conference. It is necessary, therefore, to organise a body representing all shades of opinion in which the Hindus, the Muslims, the Sikhs and others could join on equal footing. As the basic aim of unity is to offer a united front for redress of the common ills and the Muslim Conference has openly declared that its aim is to attain responsible Government in the State, it is the duty of the Conference to change its creed in order to give practical shape to the desired unity.

Reactions

'It will not be out of place to mention here the reactionary elements who have come in the field with full vigour to oppose the demand for responsible Government and to create difficulties in our forward march. All such reactionary elements have made a common cause, irrespective of caste and creed, and a mysterious hand is pulling the wires. The vested interests who are afraid of responsible Government are spending huge amounts of money and have 'in the name of religion' created an alarm. It is for you to fight these reactionary forces and so long as you do not give them a battle, it will be difficult for you to achieve the desired goal. The first blow you can strike against the reactionary forces is by unanimously adopting the resolution and changing the Muslim Conference into National Conference'.

Kashmir will lead

Concluding the speaker remarked:

'This day will be a red letter day in the political history of Kashmir. Not only the people of Kashmir, but the people of British India and Indian States are looking forward to the decision which you arrive at today. Kashmir can lead the 561 Indian States. The decision which you arrive at today can affect the politics of the whole country from Gilgit to Cape Comorin. You have assembled today not only to decide your own fate but the fate of the coming generation. If the reactionary spirit has the upper-hand today not only we, but also the coming generation will have to suffer for wrongs done by us. I am sure that you will arrive at a decision which will give to Kashmir an honourable position with the desired freedom. In the end I remind you of what our leader, Mr S.M. Abdullah, said at Jammu. You should remain firm on your resolve. Talk less and do more. And in this way achieve your desired goal.'

¹ Ghulam Mohammed Sadiq is one of the nationalist socialists who actively worked with Shaikh Mohammad Abdullah for restoration of Responsible government and Constitutional Reforms in the Kashmir State, presided over Kashmir Muslim Youth League in 1939; Member of Central Working Committee of National Conference in 1939. After the State's accession to India later on joining the Congress, he became its leader in Jammu and Kashmir State, and the State's Chief Minister from 1964 to 1971.

22. S.M. Abdullah's reply to Critics

Hindustan Times, 19 June 1939

Srinagar
17 June 1939

'Though the ruling class is Hindu, the truth is that the Hindu masses do not share the privy purse nor do they inhabit the royal palaces. They live in the same wretched and appalling condition as the Muslim masses, and inhabit mud huts, are poverty-stricken and in no way profit by the Hindu Raj. We attack the system of administration and not the religion of the present irresponsible Government. that is why the Hindu masses will join our struggle and we have invited them to do so.' These observations are made in a statement just issued by S.M. Abdullah, President of the All Jammu and Kashmir National Conference.

He adds: 'An Anglo-Indian paper in Lahore writing under caption: "What is in a name"? asks "Why has the All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference decided to change its name to All Jammu and Kashmir National Conference"? It does not wait for an answer, but proceeds to arrive at certain conclusions, which are wholly unfounded and show an amount of deliberate ignorance'.

Mr Abdullah, who is mainly responsible for the change and who was the soul of the Muslim Conference, himself explains: 'What is in a name'? He says: 'The main reason why the name of the Muslim Conference has been changed is to provide equal opportunity to the non-Muslim subjects of the Jammu and Kashmir State to join their Muslim brethren in their fight for the achievement of responsible government. It is true that the two main planks of the Muslim Conference platform—responsible government and civil liberty—remain unchanged and that the future of the National Conference will do more than intensify the agitation with regard to these. In fact, the present National Conference and the All Muslim Conference are identical, the difference lies only in the name. And the name counts, as the forthcoming struggle must embrace the urge of the Hindu masses as well. The Muslim Conference could not on the ground that it was communal in name, allow the entry of non-Muslims within its fold, however much the planks of its platform might have been board-based. Now that its name and the constitution have been altered, it is possible that the future struggle may take a wholly national colour. We are sure that it will'.

'The question of services', he continues, 'which the paper is anxious to over-emphasise is not really so important and will not affect adversely the Hindu population'. This question does not concern anybody except a limited self-seeking middle class. It merely touches the surface. This question will pale before the all-embracing and fundamental demand of responsible government, which rests on the strength not of the middle classes, whether Hindus or Muslims, but on the strength of the masses, both Hindus and Muslims.'

Concluding, he says: 'The paper has towards the end of the comment made a reference to the Hindus who have joined us or are likely to join us. It has labelled them as 'malcontents'. They are no doubt malcontents under the present irresponsible system of Government which they are anxious to end. It is their malcontent, a better word for which would be dissatisfaction, that has led them inside the prison walls. In fact we are all malcontents, dissatisfied and determined to change the present political structure of our State. We have begun with the change in the name of the Muslim Conference'.

23. Jawaharlal Nehru to the Editor, *Hamdard*, 30 July 1939

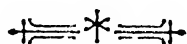
SWJN, Vol. 31, p. 36

I send my good wishes to the *Hamdard*.

I am glad to learn that it is growing and from a weekly it is being converted into a daily. I hope this growth of the *Hamdard* is symbolic of the growing strength of the Nationalist movement in Kashmir. Kashmir, like all other States as well as the rest of India, has great and difficult problems to face. If we hold to our anchor and do not forget our basic principles, we shall win through. We are often tempted by some petty and temporary advantage to compromise with these principles. While some kind of compromise is often necessary in public life, there can be no compromise with a fundamental principle.

The recent birth of the Kashmir National Conference is of good omen for the future. I hope that the spirit of nationalism will spread and will gradually eliminate all narrow feelings of communalism or sectarianism. This nationalism must necessarily be based on the freedom of the people and this freedom must be shared by all.

As a child of Kashmir the fate of that beautiful land is dear to me and I send my greetings.



24. Communal Agitation in Kashmir

Editorial, *Leader*, 3 August 1939. See also *Hindustan Times*, 3 July 1939

3 August 1939

The annual administration report of the Jammu and Kashmir state for 1937–38 contains, among other things, an interesting account of the political situation in the state. Because at the last session of the Kashmir Muslim Conference it was decided that the conference should in future be known as the Kashmir National Conference, we are asked to believe that the conference has ceased to be a Muslim organisation. What gives a national character to a movement is not its name, but the aims and objects for which it stands. The present administration report describes some of the activities of the Kashmir Muslim Conference and some of its leading members. These furnish the answer to the question, whether the Conference is intended to promote the interests of Kashmir as a whole or those of a particular community. One of the resolutions passed by the Muslim Conference last year demanded that the Government should grant representation in the public services to Muslims in proportion to their population in the state. We could have understood if the Conference had suggested that candidates for recruitment to the public services should be selected on the basis of their success at a competitive examination. But the Conference demands that those in authority should be guided by communal considerations and not by considerations of merit. It is true that this resolution was passed before the Conference underwent the change of name. But the Conference has not yet rescinded that resolution. A resolution to the same effect was moved by a member of the Muslim Conference party in the Praja Sabha (State Legislative Assembly). The resolution was opposed by Pandit Jia Lal Kilam and, as the party are not in a majority, rejected by the Sabha.

Later on Mr Kilam joined the Muslim Conference, whose propagandists have been exploiting his presence among them. They argue that if the Conference had not been a national organisation, a Kashmiri Pandit who held nationalist view and who had not opposed them in the past, would not be cooperating with them today. How Mr Kilam was converted to the Muslim Conference creed has been described in the Kashmir State Annual Administration Report. At the last general election Mr Kilam who was a candidate for one of the Kashmir Pandit seats, was defeated by Pandit Shiv Narayan Fotedar¹, President of the Sanatan Dharam Young Men's Association. On his defeat Mr Kilam issued a statement in which he announced that as his own community had repudiated him, he repudiated the community, and that he would in future join hands with the organisations outside his community. He approached the leaders of the Muslim Conference. He was received with open arms. But it is significant that political wisdom dawned upon him soon after his defeat at the election. It is also a notable fact that not many Hindus have been persuaded to join the so-called National Conference. Evidently in Kashmir Muslims alone have imbibed the spirit of nationalism.

The Kashmir National Conference, we have been told, have accepted the creed of non-violence. But the creed of non-violence as practiced in Kashmir is different in very material respects from the creed of non-violence as preached by Mr Gandhi. Mr Mahomed Akbar, who belongs to the Muslim Conference, delivered a speech of a highly inflammatory character. He was convicted and sentenced to three months' imprisonment by the sessions judge of Jammu. Mr Akbar appealed to the High Court, but his conviction was upheld. As a protest against this the Conference organised public meetings at which passages objected to in the speech of Mr Akbar were repeated. These tactics compelled the authorities to prohibit under Section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code, the holding of public meetings of that character in Srinagar. The order was defied, and when the police asked the meeting to disperse they were pelted with stones. The Prime Minister's Car was

stoned. It was damaged. One man jumped on the footboard of the car. The facts mentioned above are enough to show that the agitation conducted by the Muslim 'nationalist' is neither national nor non-violent. What led some of the Congress leaders, who have expressed their disapproval of the satyagraha movement in Hyderabad, to express their sympathy with the Kashmir National Conference, is difficult to understand. It may be mentioned that in the Kashmir Praja Sabha the number of Muslim members is larger than that of the Hindus. In other respects too the Muslims of Kashmir possess more rights and privileges than the Hindus of Hyderabad.

¹ Pandit Shiv Narayan Fotedar was the member of the Committee constituted to settle the Hindu-Muslim dispute in Multan, in district Islamabad; President, Yuvak Sabha.

25. Jammu and Kashmir National Conference

Proceedings of the Annual Session of the All Jammu and Kashmir National Conference held from 30 September to 2 October 1939. AISPC Papers, File No. 5, Group No. 2, pp. 29–35, NMML

*Publicity Branch
Mujahid Manzil
Srinagar
30 September 1939*

Unprecedented excitement was witnessed everywhere in the town of Anantnag from the day the leaders of the Jammu and Kashmir National Conference arrived here to attend the Annual Session which had come to close on 2nd October. The President elected, Mr S.M. Abdullah, was taken out in a huge procession through the main Bazars of the town on Saturday.

A tastefully decorated Pandal was erected outside the town at the foot of hillock. Dozens of tents had been pitched for accommodating the delegates and distinguished visitors. Apart from the Hindu and Muslim kitchens arranged by the Reception Committee, private hotels had also been started by certain individuals.

The Working Committee and General Council held their meetings on Friday and Saturday. They passed many resolutions, only twelve out of which were placed before the open session.

A red flag with a sign of plough inscribed in the middle having been adopted as the National Flag for Kashmir State by the Conference, a flag hoisting ceremony was observed on 2nd October in the morning.

The text of the resolutions passed is as below:

1. The Jammu and Kashmir National Conference ratified the document known as National Demand which was issued by several leaders of Jammu and Kashmir under their own signatures on 27th August last year.
2. The Jammu and Kashmir National Conference decided that the National flag for Jammu and Kashmir State will be of red colour with a sign of plough inscribed in its center.
3. The Jammu and Kashmir National Conference is of opinion that although it is not against a scheme of Indian Federation in which the peoples of the Indian States would enjoy full powers and representation by election yet it wants to make this fact plain in clearest possible language that no such scheme will be acceptable which has not been adopted after discussion and exchange of views with the States people and unless such Responsible Government has been introduced in the State as is envisaged in our National Demands. This Conference is further of opinion that now when the Federal Scheme has been

postponed by His Excellency the Viceroy of India due to unusual circumstances this scheme will be replaced by another scheme in which the aspirations and demands of states people are duly honoured.

4. In view of the fact that the British Government and their allies claim that the present war is being fought only to protect democracy and make it secure, the Jammu and Kashmir National Conference is of opinion that in order to make this claim effective it is necessary that the existing irresponsible forms of administration in the Indian States should be substituted by such forms of Government as will be responsible to the people. The Conference therefore prays His Highness to kindly issue commands for the establishment of Responsible Government in this State in the near future in unambiguous and unconditional terms.
5. The Jammu and Kashmir National Conference appreciates the intention behind the statement issued by the Working Committee. Of the Indian National Congress regarding the present European war and the policy of the British Government towards political aspirations of the Indian Nation. The Conference totally agrees with the views and opinions expressed in the resolution regarding democracy and international politics. The Conference hopes that while getting the position of the people in India explained by the British Government before finally deciding about participation or otherwise in the war, the Congress will not rest assured or satisfied unless the introduction of Responsible Government in the Indian States is accepted by the British Government and promised by the Rulers of the States.
6. The Jammu and Kashmir National Conference is of the opinion that the Poonch *illaca* is an inalienable part of the Jammu and Kashmir State and the progress and welfare of the people living in the Kashmir province, Jammu province and Poonch are interconnected. The present dual administration in Poonch is the source of great trouble to the people there and it must therefore be ended. In order that the differences which arise from time to time regarding the Poonch politics may come to a close and the administration of that Jagir may be rough on the same level as in the rest of the State, this conference demands that an Enquiry Commission composed of official and non-official members presided over by an impartial man, be appointed by Government of Jammu and Kashmir to report on the ways and means of ending this form of administration.
7. This Conference after having gone through the appeal that has recently been issued by His Highness to the Dogra and Rajput sections of the people is of the opinion that the appeal if at all it was necessary to issue is apt to raise provincial and racial issues which should be the earnest endeavour of all well-wishers of humanity to avoid. It credits certain sections of the people of Jammu and Kashmir State with those qualifications which are not only not peculiar to the above but are shared with them by other sections of the people in a great degree. This Conference makes a demand in most emphatic terms to the Adviser of His Highness that they should always take correct stock of the existing circumstances and never be a party to imparting such advice as is responsible for the issuing (of) such an appeal.... Which has in the natural order of things caused a lot of righteous indignation in the minds of the non-Dogra and non-Rajput sections of the people.
8. This Conference is painfully aware of the appealing unemployment obtaining amongst the people in the State and is of the opinion that this problem cannot be successfully tackled as long as the definite scheme of industrialization is launched in the State. This Conference is further of the definite opinion that no scheme of industrialisation can

successfully work in the State as long as sufficient finances are not made available by the Government. But under the existing top-heavy administration it is not possible to expect any finances being made available by the Government. It therefore resolves that an effective reduction be made in the salaries of higher appointments in the State and in this connection it makes bold to make a humble request to His Highness also to be pleased to forego a portion of the civil list so as to set an example for other officers in the State for whom the resolution is meant.

9. This session of the All Jammu and Kashmir National Conference unanimously protests against the imposing of lathi charge, punitive taxes, heavy fines and other repressive measures adopted by the Government in connection with the last year's political movement.
10. According to resolution No. 10 twenty-five amendments have been made in the constitution of the All Jammu and Kashmir National Conference.
11. National Conference resolves that efforts should be made to connect the administration of Chenhani Jagir with that the Jammu and Kashmir State.
12. This Conference resolves that appointments should be kept open to all the subjects of State without distinction of colour, caste or creed, for the recruitment in State armies.

26. Nehru's Message to Kashmir Conference

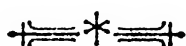
Hindustan Times, 5 October 1939

4 October 1939

'The Conference is meeting at a time of very great crisis in the world which will be reflected more and more in India. We cannot escape that crisis or ignore this revolutionary period of the world's history. I believe that the next few years will see vast changes in the political and economic structure of the world and of India. All of us, therefore, must appreciate the full significance of what is happening and fashion our activities accordingly. We cannot take just a narrow view of events because if we do so we shall fail to understand them. All the world is on the move, and India must move with it not separately or in isolation. India must attain her full freedom based on unity,' says Pt Jawaharlal Nehru in the course of his message to the first annual session of the Jammu and Kashmir National Conference.

He adds: 'I send my greetings to the Jammu and Kashmir National Conference on the occasion of its session. I had hoped to visit Kashmir in the course of the last summer, but events forced me to go to Ceylon and then to China. Very regretfully I had to give up my Kashmir visit this summer. But as I have often said, I am continually drawn to Kashmir, and as soon as I am able to do so, I shall visit that beautiful country, which, it is a privilege for me to call especially my own.'

"I trust that Kashmir will play an honourable part in the events to come. I hope that the Conference will view all these events that are happening in true perspective so that the people of Kashmir may attain their freedom in the larger freedom of India. Above all, it is necessary for us to pull together whether we live in the Indian provinces or in the states, whether are Hindus or Mussalmans or Sikhs or any other inhabiting this great country. I trust that under the able leadership of Mr S.M. Abdullah all the people of Kashmir will work with courage and sobriety for the objective in view. I send my good wishes to the Conference and to the people of Kashmir," he concludes.



27. Jawaharlal Nehru to Ghulam Mohammad Bakshi, 3 December 1939

SWJN, Vol. 10, pp. 505–06

My dear Bakshiji,

Niranjan Nath Raina¹ has given us the lovely apples which you sent from Kashmir. They have been greatly appreciated and I am grateful to you for them.

Niranjan Nath tells me that you are under the impression that I have forgotten Kashmir. I am surprised to learn this. Surely you do me little credit if you think so. Kashmir occupies a warm corner in my heart, not only because of the personal associations, but because of my being intensely interested in the national freedom movement there. But you know how rapidly developments are taking place in India and the world and we have to be continuously on the alert. Every three weeks or so we have a meeting of the Congress Working Committee which lasts for a week and then there is very important other work. I want to tour about but am unable to find the time for it.

There is no place in India which calls me more than Kashmir. My desire to go there is far greater than yours to summon me. I shall come, have no doubt about, it but I cannot say now when this will be. Meanwhile all of us, wherever we may be, must keep alert and prepare for all eventualities.

With all good wishes to Sheikh Saheb and to other colleagues in Kashmir.

¹ Niranjan Nath Raina was a freedom fighter and Head of Department of Physics, University of Kashmir.

28. Proceedings of the All Jammu and Kashmir National Conference

Proceeding of the All Jammu and Kashmir National Conference, AISPC Papers, Kashmir (Correspondence) File No. 92, NMML

Mirpur

30 December 1939

The Working Committee of the All Jammu and Kashmir National Conference met yesterday in the morning under the Presidentship of Mr S M. Abdullah. After prolonged discussions during the course of the whole day the following resolutions were passed:

1. The Working Committee of the All Jammu and Kashmir National Conference have considered the present political situation in the country. The Committee are of opinion that in order to develop and intensify the struggle for the achievement of the objective of the Conference the work inside the Legislative Assembly and other constitutional bodies should also be taken in hand and organised side by side with the spread of the network of branches of the Conference all over the country so that the nation is carried rapidly towards its goal of responsible Government. The Committee are of opinion that in the present circumstances it is harmful to the interests of the motherland that parliamentary activities are ignored. They, therefore, consider that if these activities are carried on in an efficient, disciplined and well-organised manner it is bound to prove helpful in the struggle for the achievement of the responsible government in the state.

With this purpose in view the Committee nominates the following five members to form a Sub-Committee to help, guide and supervise the party in the Legislative Assembly which is composed of the members who believe in the goal of the National Conference and are prepared to follow its mandates issued from time to time: (1) Mr M.A. Beg,¹

Chairman, (2) Sardar Budh Singh, (3) Ch. Ghulam Abass,² (4) Mr G.M. Sadiq and (5) Pt Jia Lal Kilam. This Sub-Committee will remain in charge of all the Parliamentary work and will see that nothing is done inside the Legislative Assembly by members individually or jointly which in any way directly or indirectly harms the cause for which the National Conference stands. The Sub-Committee also will guide the party in such a way and make it work in such a manner that the hollowness of the present constitution is demonstrated in the most effective manner. Thus the Committee expects that the appointment of the Sub-Committee will strengthen the struggle which other constituent parts of the Conference will carry on in other spheres of the activities outside.

The Working Committee do not consider it advisable that the Sub-Committee should be burdened with work inside the various Municipalities and District Boards. The Committee is of opinion that such activities should be supervised and conducted by the respective District Committees who can, if they so desire it, form their own Sub-Committees for this purpose on similar lines and also take advice from the Parliamentary Sub-Committee from time to time whenever necessary.

The Working Committee, however, wants to make one thing definitely known. The decision to regulate the parliamentary work inside the various constitutional bodies does not in any way change the outlook of the Committee about the relation of the Conference with the existing irresponsible government in the State and the politics in general. The Committee fully realise that the goal of responsible Government can be achieved only by strengthening the organisation, by creating a strong will in the nation to have its birth right. Working inside the constitutional bodies, can, therefore only help to intensify that struggle. No Conference member should, therefore, find any cue in this fresh move to deal with the authorities in a manner which will in any way directly or indirectly harm the prestige of the Conference.

The Working Committee also hope that workers in all parts of the state will enthusiastically attempt to form village Committees of the Conference and strengthen the district organisations by enlisting primary members in the months to come in order that at the time of the next annual session of the Conference the delegates may be elected from every nook and corner of the country. It should be fully realized that the success which will attend the organisational work outside will in the main determine the advance towards our objective. Other activities can only assist.

2. The Working Committee of the Jammu and Kashmir National Conference has considered the list of the subjects prescribed for the Kashmir Civil Service Gazetted Examination, published in the Government Gazette of 6th Poh 1936. It strongly resents exclusion of the recognised Court Language of the State viz., Hindustani, from the list of both the compulsory and the optional subjects. Next to mother tongues spoken in the State, Hindustani is not only understood by the vast majority of the people of the State, but it is also generally used in the Government offices. It is also invariably made use of as medium of communication between the officials and the general public.

This Committee further disapproves the absolute exclusion of all the principal languages spoken in the State, from the list of subjects prescribed. The Working Committee, therefore, strongly urge that Hindustani be prescribed as one of the compulsory subjects, facility should however be given to the candidates to use either Persian or Devanagri script as they like.

The Working Committee also demands that candidates be required to possess at least workable knowledge of the principal languages spoken in the State.

3. For the convenience of non-Hindi knowing public the Working Committee resolves to draw the attention of the Government to the advisability and necessity of printing at an early date the value of the Judicial and Revenue Stamps on them in Persian Script also.

Maulana Mohammed Saeed³ and Pt Prem Nath Bazaz were elected General Secretary and Cashier respectively for the current year by the Committee.

¹ Mirza Mohammad Afzal Beg, 1908–82; graduation from Sri Pratap College, Srinagar; LLB from AMU; joined Kashmir Freedom Movement 1931; returned unopposed to the Legislative Assembly in 1934; General Secretary, Jammu and Kashmir National Conference; re-elected to State Assembly in 1938; one of the two popular Ministers in the Maharaja's Cabinet when he introduced system of diarchy in 1945; arrested during Quit Kashmir Movement launched by Sheikh Abdullah against autocratic rule of Maharaja; joined Abdullah's Cabinet in 1948 with portfolio of revenue and rehabilitation; joined Cabinet as Deputy Prime Minister in 1975.

² Ghulam Abass was one of the 26 representatives of the Muslim Conference leaders that met in Kashmir on 10 June 1939. He later appealed to Muslims in Kashmir not to join hands with Quit Kashmir Movement against the Maharaja; President of Muslim Conference in October, 1946 at Srinagar.

³ Maulana Mohammed Saeed, a resident of Karnah, Muzaffarabad district, Arabic teacher of SP High School; resigned from service and offered himself for arrest; General Secretary of Muslim Conference; editor of *The Daily Khidmat*.

29. Administration Report of the Police Department CID

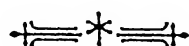
Jammu and Kashmir (General Records), Political Department, File No. B/363, 1939, NAI

Muslims and National Movement

During the year Mohamed Abdullah and his party decided that it was not possible for them to achieve their aims without the cooperation of the minority communities a change in tactics was therefore made and a line of action designed to induce Hindus to join was adopted.

The first move was to enlist support of the Indian National Congress and to encourage that organisation to bring pressure to bear on the Hindus. With this object they established a branch of the All India States People's Conference at Srinagar. Invitations to Hindus to enlist as members evoked little response, however, and only a few who had been expelled from the local Hindu organisations agreed to join. The association also deputed about 30 members as delegates to join the session of the All States people's Conference at Ludhiana.

The next move to obtain the sympathy of other communities was the alteration of the name of the Muslim Conference into that of 'National Conference'. Hindus and Sikhs in general, however, kept aloof, as they felt that the ultimate object of the Abdullites was the establishment of 'Pakistan' in Northern India. On the other hand, the new name of the association alienated the sympathies of the majority of Muslims who then established branches of the All India Muslim League in both Srinagar and Jammu. The organizers of the local Muslim League impressed on the Muslims that this so-called nationalism was introduced by Mohamed Abdullah and his colleagues in order to attain their selfish desire to become Ministers and it was prejudicial to the interests of Muslims. Much rivalry and ill-feeling ensued between the Muslim League and the National Conference. On several occasions stones were thrown by members of one party on the processions and meetings of the other and fights occurred. On these occasions, timely action by the police promptly restored order....



II PUNJAB: PUNJAB HILL STATES AND DHAMI

1. On the States in Punjab: Wilberforce-Bell to Glancy, 7 January 1939

File no. 6(3)-P(5)39, Punjab State Archives

My dear Glancy,

The tragedy of Bazalgette¹ has given point to certain aspects of the political situation about which I have been thinking for some time and particularly to the holding in British India of meetings of propaganda against the States by Congress under the guise of Praja Mandals or Subjects' Conference of various descriptions. My attitude with regard to the Punjab State in the matter of such assemblies in States has been to discourage them and this has not been difficult in other few cases with which hitherto we have been confronted. The Patiala Darbar have taken effective action in their own account, while the Nabha Darbar did the same with my approval and the Faridkot Darbar acted similarly after consulting me on the subject and asking my advice as to a line of action. Malerkotla and Kapurthala also have, after discussions with me, strongly discouraged the subversive attempts of Congress to agitate within their territorial limits through Praja Mandals. No other State has been seriously affected except Kalsia and the agitation in that case was engineered outside the State. When matters began to look serious, I asked the Punjab Government to take action under the Indian States' (Protection) Act to protect the State from further aggression and they kindly introduced the necessary sections of the Act in the Districts of Ferozepur, Jullundhar, Hoshiarpur, Ludhiana, Amritsar and Ambala. This immediately put a stop to the agitation.

There is now likely to be a serious attempt to promote disaffection in all the Punjab States, and the plan of Congress to hold a meeting of the so-called AISPC at Ludhiana² early in February is nothing but a further attempt to develop agitations where it has not yet found root. My object in writing is to ask if further consideration can be given to my suggestion that provinces may be asked to prevent any such meeting in British India without waiting, until trouble has developed. I am aware that some definite reason for proscribing meetings or for applying the Indian States' (Protection) Act is a legal necessity, but surely the very fact that a meeting is advertised, as has been amply proved elsewhere, is in itself sufficient to warrant a danger of a breach of the peace, possibly not in British India but certainly in States or in a particular State against which agitation is specifically directed.

In the Punjab States we are fortunate in that all the larger States have ample police force, which they can support by their adequate military resources. This does not apply, however, in the case of little States, which actually need, for various reasons, to be protected since their finances do not run to maintain properly trained military units. I have not approached the Punjab Government with a view to their prohibiting the advertised meeting at Ludhiana since the matter is of much more than local significance. No doubt you are already considering what policy should be adopted in British India against the agitation now being developed there in respect of the States, and if it is decided actually to prohibit meetings of States Subjects Conferences in British India all provinces will be taken into account. I shall be glad if I can be given guidance in this matter at an early date, for if the Punjab Government has to be approached by me it would be as well to give them adequate time for consideration of a proposal to prohibit the Ludhiana meeting.

¹ See below in Orissa States 'Report on the Ranpur Incident', 6 January 1939.

² See above 'Ludhiana Conference' 15 February 1939.

2. Gandhi on Conditions in Dhami State

SWJN, Vol. 10, pp. 507–08

4 March 1939

In July last year the little state of Dhami near Simla suddenly gained notoriety because of firing by the State authorities on a deputation of its residents who had gone to the ruler¹ to place their grievances before him and ask for reforms. Several persons were killed and wounded. An enquiry was demanded but refused. A non-official inquiry took place and revealed a deplorable state of affairs, the responsibility for which was shared by the political agent. Later, a further inquiry into the grievances of some of the Simla hill states was conducted on behalf of the All India States people's Conference². These petty states living under the shadow of Simla are extraordinarily backward and the combination of the political agent and the ruler has produced most unfortunate results which bear down heavily on the people. There is continuous ferment and continuous repression. Dhami became a symbol of all this and its peasantry have suffered greatly during the last eight months.

Ten days ago matters came to a climax by the political agent arranging a tour of the state accompanied by a batch of government police. Many villages have been visited and it is stated that the villagers are panic-stricken and in a state of terror. Large numbers of refugees, especially men, have gone outside the state but even in neighbouring states they are being harassed. The reports of what the police have done and are doing are amazing and almost unbelievable. Yet we know that nothing is incredible in a state. All this is happening not only under the shadow of Simla but with its active help.

¹ Rana Dalip Singh, b. 1908, succeeded to the throne on 1 January 1920.

² In 1939 Jawaharlal Nehru had, on behalf of the States People's Conference, ordered a thorough and comprehensive assessment of the land revenue system, the living conditions, the position of women and popular rights in the numerous hill states surrounding Simla

3. Resolutions passed in the meeting of the Himalayan States People's Conference held at Delhi on 2 April 1939, under the Presidentship of Bhulabhai Desai

AISPC Papers, File No. 191, 1939–46, NMML

This Conference deeply regrets that even at this stage of national awakening, the Hill States are far backward and their subjects much too oppressed. It, therefore, feels that it requires Herculean efforts on the part of the subjects to reform the administration in this part of the country to keep pace with India's battle for freedom. It accordingly draws attention towards this fact, of Mahatma Gandhi, the Indian National Congress and the All India States people's Conference and urges upon them the necessity of appointing, at a very early date, an influential enquiry committee to look into the grievances of untold sufferings of the dumb and down trodden subjects of the said states.

While welcoming the formation of individual Praja Mandals in various hill states, viz. Tehri, Sirmoor, Beghal, Mandi, Patiala etc. as a sign of political awakening, this conference feels the necessity of a central organisation for all hill States with a view to giving right lead to, and coordinating the activities of individual Praja Mandals. It therefore proposes to appoint a committee of five representatives with powers to co-op under the chairmanship of Pt Badri Datta Pande¹,

MLA (Central) and empowers that committee to take necessary action towards the formation of the Himalayan States People's central organisation. Further this conference appoints Sri Dev Suman² as the convener of this committee.

This conference expresses full and implicit faith of the Hills States' subjects in the benevolent guidance and leadership of Mahatma Gandhi and hopes and believes that he will be pleased to pay special attention towards the uplift and amelioration of the most oppressed and depressed people of the Hill States.

This conference strongly condemns the tyrannical and inhuman practices and also the extortionist demands, such as forced labour, Athawara, Prabhu Sewa, Chaubandi, tax on marriages, Nazrana on the birth, marriage, installation and death of the Raja, Pantoti, Servant tax, shaving off head and whiskers of the whole male populace and compulsory removal of ornaments of females at the death of the Ruling Chief or any member of his family, total prohibition of all domestic work during mourning period, tax on the suckling of children and raising money by contracts of liquor, opium charas and even matches, cigarettes and sweetmeats, by the Rulers of the States on their subjects and requests the princes to move with the times and redress the legitimate grievances of their subjects without further delay. This meeting also requests the princes to grant full civil liberties to their subjects as a preliminary to the introduction of responsible Government at the earliest possible opportunity.

This conference feels that while several states are considering measures to introduce reforms and responsible Governments, it is deplorable that Tehri Garhwal, Sirmoor, Patiala, Mandi etc. are trying to crush the popular movements and the civil liberties of the people by naked repression and urges upon:

The Tehri Durbar to withdraw forthwith the registration of Association Act, which has recently been passed by the unpopular and irresponsible State Assembly with a view to crushing the rising tide of political awakening and even religious and social activities in the State and requests that a non-official enquiry committee should be formed to enquire into the legitimate demands of the subjects;

the Sirmoor Durbar to end the terrorisation frightfulness and harassment of the subjects and to allow the Sirmoor Praja Mandal to work on constitutional lines in the State and requests the Maharaja to withdraw immediately the trumped up cases instituted against the Praja Mandal workers and others to over-awe the subjects and release them unconditionally.

This Conference is of the opinion that most of the Hill States, owing to their smallness and financial weakness, are totally unable to run the administration on modern lines and to introduce responsible Governments singly and therefore they should either form groups or be amalgamated with their neighbouring provinces for the purposes of administration with suitable provisions for the reasonable rights and privileges of the Rulers concerned, as adopted in the resolution of the All India States People's Conference held at Ludhiana,³ and further implemented in HE the Viceroy's speech at a meeting of the Chamber of Princes.⁴

¹ Badri Dutt Pande (1882–1965); discontinued his studies after graduation; took up employment as a teacher in a school in Kumaon; joined Hindu High School in Almora; wrote articles in *Almora Akhbar* advocating cause of widow remarriage, political freedom for India; believed in non-violent methods; noted journalist and parliamentarian; author of '*Kumaon Ka Itihas*'.

² Dev Suman—Secretary of Enquiry Committee, formed to look into tragic happenings in Dhami on 16 July.

³ The All India States People's Conference was held at Ludhiana on 15 February 1939, under presidentship of Jawaharlal Nehru.

⁴ At the Annual Session of the Chamber of Princes at New Delhi on 13 and 14 March 1939. For full text of the Speech, see *LAR*, 1939 Vol. I, pp. 422–24.

4. Copy of Resolutions passed by the Dhami Riasat Praja Mandal on the evening of the 13 July 1939

AISPC Papers, File No. 181, 1939 (Pt. II), NMML

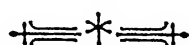
1. This General Public Meeting of the Dhami State subjects resolves that on account of the stress of circumstances the name of the Dhami Prem Pracharni Sabha be changed into Dhami Riasat Praja Mandal and the alterations and additions may be affected in the rules and regulations accordingly. From this date all the members of the said Sabha be considered as members of D.R.P. Mandal.
2. This general public meeting of the Dhami State subjects strongly urges upon the Rana Sahib of the Dhami State to grant full responsible Government (representative Government) to his subjects immediately.
3. This general public meeting of the Dhami State subjects sincerely requests the ruler that the Dhami Riasat Praja Mandal which is the sole representative body of the Dhami State subjects may be recognised civil liberties and right free speech and platform be forthwith granted to the public.
4. This general public meeting of the Dhami State subjects is of the opinion that a strong appeal be addressed to the ruler to effect 50 per cent remission in land revenue as there has been partial but constant failures of crops for the last three years.
5. This general public meeting is of the opinion that the forced labour which is still taken from the subjects inspite of the benign directions of the paramount powers and the protests from the public, be at once abolished.
6. This general meeting of the Dhami State subjects resolve that a deputation committee be formed in order to place before Shri Rana Sahib all the legitimate grievances and demands of the public.
7. This general meeting is of the opinion that the ruler may be earnestly requested to lift all restrictions and bans, as imposed on such subjects of Dhami State, who had been exiled from the state and they may be allowed to resume their possession of land and property in the State.

5. Secretary, Dhami Riasat Praja Mandal to Rana Sahib, Dhami State

AISPC Papers, File No. 181, 1939 (Pt. ii), NMML

14 July 1939

I am directed by the Dhami Riasat Praja Mandal to forward the copies of the resolutions passed unanimously in the General meeting held on the 13th of July, 1939. The two copies of the resolutions are enclosed herewith. I am further instructed to request your Highness to treat these demands as urgent and favour us with your favourable reply which this Mandal always expects from the noble ruler. If failing to receive reply before Saturday evening, the meeting has decided to send a deputation of the Dhami State subjects led by Thakur Bhagmal Sautha, General Secretary of the Himalaya Riasati Praja Mandal, Simla, to wait upon your Highness on Sunday, the 16th of July, 1939, at 3 p.m. at your palace.



6. Report of the Non-Official Enquiry into the tragic happenings in Dhami State on 16 July 1939

AISPC Papers, File No. 181, 1939 (Pt. II), NMML

[This report was submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru by Shri Dev Suman, Secretary of the Enquiry Committee. At the request of Simla Hill States Himalaya Riayasti Praja Mandal, Duni Chand, Advocate, MLA (Punjab), Member, AICC, Shridev Suman, Chairman Parvatia Praja Parishad, (Garhdesw Sewasangh), Delhi and Hill States Peoples' representative on the AISPC Standing Committee, L. Kishori Lal, President Arya Samaj, Simla and L. Sham Lal, President, City Congress Committee, Simla, agreed to serve as members of the Committee to enquire into the happenings in Dhami State on 16th July 1939 and the circumstances that led to them. L. Duni Chand was unanimously elected as President and Shri Shridev Suman as Secretary and Convener of the Enquiry Committee.

The Enquiry Committee started work from the evening of 25th July and sat consecutively for 26th, 27th, 28th, and 29th July 1939. The Enquiry Committee recorded the statements of thirty witnesses separately and a joint statement of over 200 men of Dhami State who were present at the time of the alleged occurrence. The Committee also received in evidence a number of affidavits of certain persons duly attested by a Magistrate of Simla and other relevant documents i.e. copies of the resolutions passed by the Conference on 13th July 1939 etc. Out of the witnesses examined separately, there are twenty one (21) wounded persons ... and later on of the Dhami Riyasti Praja Mandal, in accordance with a resolution passed by the conference of the people of Dhami State on that day. It will not be out of place to mention here that Dhami is a tiny State about 14 miles North-West of Simla town with a population of 5,232 souls and revenue all told of about 30,000 Rupees yearly and an area of about 28 square miles....

... On 13th July, 1939 a representative conference consisting of about 600 men belonging to Dhami State was held at Simla, under the presidency of Thakur Bhag Mal Sauhta who belongs to a highly respectable and well educated family of Jubbal State. In this conference resolutions asking for abolition of beggar, reduction of land revenue to 50%, recognition of Riyasti Praja Mandal (Dhami), the grant of civil liberties, reception of a deputation by the Rana, removal of restrictions and bans imposed on the State subjects, restoration of properties confiscated and establishment of Responsible Government, were passed. A copy of these resolutions and a written request for receiving a deputation on any date that might be suitable to him were sent to Rana Sahib and at the same time Rana Sahib was told that in case no reply fixing another date was received, the deputation, consisting of the following 7 men, namely, Thakur Bhag Mal Sauhta, Tulsi Raj, Jit Singh, Narain Das, Mast Ram, Sita Ram and Gauri Singh will proceed to Dhami on 16.7.1939 to place the grievances of the State subjects before him. A special messenger, Mansa Ram, was sent with these documents who duly handed over the same to Rana Sahib on 15th July. In the conference of 13th July the people of Dhami State were asked to meet the deputation on its entering the State territory in 'Khek-ka-maidan' about a mile and a half from *Halog*, the capital of the State.

The importance of the deputation proceeding to the headquarters of the State accompanied by a large number of the subjects of the State will not be appreciated unless the story of the grievances, woes, and sufferings of the people of the State is narrated in this report. The Committee will like to classify the grievances as ordinary and extra-ordinary ones. In the first category are included the excessive land revenue, taking of *begar*, conversion of the people's lands into State forest, denial of any kind of civil liberties, refusal to protect crops against wild beasts and the absence of any judicial or administrative institutions worth the name. In the second category are included illegal and forcible exactions, indiscriminate fines, forcible levies without resorting to

any kind of legal process, inhuman forms of oppression and tyranny, confiscation of people's property, compulsory enforcement of certain observances on the part of the State subjects in connection with deaths and marriages taking place in the families of Rana Sahib and his relations. The readers of this report will not have the true picture of these acts unless they are described in greater detail.

Formerly in the absence of collateral relations upto 5th degree, the estate of a childless male proprietor or a widow lapsed to the State and now if there are no collateral relations upto the 3rd degree the estate lapses to the State. Daughters and their sons have no right of succession as against the State. Thakur Kashi Ram a highly respectable and educated gentleman who is at present President of a Simla Hill States Riyasti Praja Mandal, has told the Enquiry Committee that in some cases even the movable property does not go to the daughters and their issues and he has quoted an instance of his own brother's wife having been denied the right of succession to both movable and immovable property in Dhami State left to her by a will executed by her mother. Hindu Law recognizes the right of collateral succession upto 14th degree and the daughter comes as next heir after male issues. Wild beasts such as bear, leopards, kakkars, ghouls, etc., who damage crops are not allowed to be killed and if any body kills them even within his own land, he is severely punished. Fines ranging between Rs 50 and 100 per head are the order of the day. It was said humourously by one of the witnesses that the life of a single kakkar carries the price of Rs 700 as in case of the killing of one kakkar different persons were fined aggregating to Rs 700. Not only this, even to approach the Rana for protection against the depredations of wild beasts is a heinous crime. An instance has been actually quoted of a case in which Hari Ram, Ganga Ram, Uma Datt, Permanand and Ganeshoo were convicted of the 'conspiracy' to dare to approach the Rana for protection of their fields against damage caused by wild beasts as promised by him in the previous year. Eight men had to spend 3 months in the police lock up before being put into court. When put into court and tried, Hari Ram was sentenced to one year's imprisonment and one hundred rupees fine and 6 men were sentenced to imprisonment and fines ranging between Rs 50 and 100 each. Ganga Ram, brother of Hari Ram, appeared before the Committee and swore as to the correctness of these facts. Another extraordinary case, though none the less amusing, was cited before the committee. About 15 years ago 3 men, Purnoo, Padma and another, were rewarded 5 rupees each for having killed a wild bear who was destroying the crops, and Ganeshoo Lambardar was praised for having sent them together with the dead body of the bear to the headquarters of the State for receiving rewards. Curiously enough 10 years later i.e. 3 years from now, the present Rana reopened the above case and fined the three 'murderers' of the 'innocent bear' 10 rupees each and the Lambardar Ganeshoo was fined 'only' Rs 40 for having sent them to the headquarters of the State for receiving rewards. Narainoo witness No. 15 told the committee that Keshwa Brahmin, Kanhu Lohar, Jamna Das Bohra and others, including himself, and numbering about 10 had installed a *murti* (an idol), and next day they were arrested and kept in havalat for 9 days and were afterwards fined as follows: Sardaroo, Keshwa, Dolat Ram Rs 80 each and others fined between Rs 20 and 50 each. Both marriages and deaths in the family of Rana Sahib or his kinsmen are followed by exactions of different varieties and harassments of different types. On the occasion of a marriage, sums 'varying between two and fifty, and on the occasion of a death, sums varying between one and five rupees are exacted from the subjects according to their paying capacity. On the occasion of Dewali, one anna per head is realized as a token of facilitations to Rana Sahib. If a death takes place in the family of the Rana, the females of the State are required to remove ornaments from their persons and the males are required to undergo the tonsure ceremony of shaving clear their heads and moustaches. Nobody is allowed to sleep on a cot. To make vegetable and other dishes tasty by putting ghee and spices into them is forbidden. The subjects cannot

marry either their sons or daughters within a year of the death. They are also required to benefit the soul of the dead by going through different kinds of ceremonies and propitiations and if anybody refuses to do so he is fined. Fines are inflicted and exactions made vagariously, and any agency such as policeman or any other servant of the State can enter the house of a defaulter and realise them. Over and above the land revenue, annas four per rupee of the land revenue are realised. The lands belonging to the Zamindars are converted into *Ghasni* and the State derives all the benefits of his family, one paisa is realised per rupee of the sale proceeds as a tax. During the *Shradh* period which lasts every year for 16 days consecutively and on other occasion during the year, every family has to supply milk to Rana Sahib. Recently a road within the State has been constructed for a distance of 7 miles or so through the labour of men and women of the State exacted from them from morning till evening without any kind of payment. If a family could not supply males, or there were no males in a family, women were required to work on the road. This road is mostly meant for the use of the motor car of the Rana. His Excellency the Viceroy goes to the State for *shikar* once a year and though he pays handsomely for the men employed in connection with *shikar* but no payment is made to them. Last time Rs 800 are said to have been paid by HE but not a paisa was paid to those employed. The above facts are supported by the joint statement of over 200 inhabitants of Dhami State and the evidence of some of the witnesses who have been separately examined. The Enquiry Committee, before recording the statement of the witnesses, exhorted them to tell nothing but truth. Apart from this, what the President of the Committee, as an experienced lawyer and other members of the Committee observed about the demeanour of the witnesses, they are satisfied as to the correctness on the whole of the statements made by them. They are simple-minded, straight-forward, plain-speaking and unsophisticated men unspoiled by the 'civilisation of the plains' and one can find no difficulty in believing them. The Enquiry Committee need not pursue any further the above story which has got both tragic and comic sides.

Now it remains to deal with the actual occurrence. The leader of the Deputation Th. Bhagmal left Simla on 16th July for Dhami at 11 a.m. Other members of the Deputation were to join him and in fact did join him either on the way or at Dhami. As soon as the leader of the Deputation reached the place called *Ghana-ki-Hatti* situated in Dhami State and about 7 miles from its headquarters the Sub-Inspector of Dhami State accompanied by 4 or 5 constables met him there and told him orally that he could not proceed to Dhami, and on this Th. Bhagmal said that he was to go with the Deputation and meet Rana Sahib and on this the Sub-Inspector arrested and handcuffed him.

At *Ghana-ki-Hatti* the Congress Flag, which the police party had forcibly snatched away from its bearers (Bhagat Ram and Devi Saran), was set on fire by them in the presence of a large number of people who honoured it. The Sub-Inspector had no written orders with him nor did he read out any such orders. As arranged previously according to the resolution of the 13th July, groups of men from different parts of the State continued to join. Th. Bhag Mal Sautha and the police. Some of the members of the Deputation and other witnesses have stated that though the arrangement was to seat the assembled crowd at *Khel-ka-Maidan* a place about a mile and a half from the capital and the members of the Deputation alone were to proceed further, the arrangement fell through as Th. Bhag Mal was taken by the police by the other route and the assembled crowd expressed a keen desire to follow the arrested leader. The Enquiry Committee is of opinion that this arrangement would have been adhered to if the leader of the Deputation had not been arrested and handcuffed. The strength of the assembled crowd is estimated by different witnesses between 1,000 and 2,500. In the opinion of the Enquiry Committee the correct estimate is in the neighbourhood of 1,500. Throughout the way members of the Deputation, other leading men,

and in particular Th. Bhag Mal, exhorted their companions to remain strictly non-violent and their advice to deposit or throw away the few lathis that some of the members of the crowd had with them, was accepted and carried out. The crowd reached the point at Halog which was hardly a furlong from the residence of the Rana and the jail. At this point were found already collected about 100 men including the Rana, Kanwar Rattan Singh, Chotta Kanwar, Mians (kinsmen of the Rana), Tikhu munshi of the Thana, Devi Ram Khazanchi, Hari Saran Bakshi, Mohan Singh, Surat Singh, Anant Ram and other retainers and *ahlkars* of the Rana—Chammars and Barars of whom some had been called from other villages. The major portion of the crowd was seated by the leaders behind at a distance of about one or two furlongs on the road and when the front portion of the crowd was at a small distance from the place where the Rana and others were seated, Thakur Bhag Mal was forcibly dragged away from among the crowd to a distance in the direction of the police station and jail. Some of the members of the crowd felt keenly the treatment meted out to their leader and wanted to follow him and actually only two men, Mansa Ram and Dharam Dass went with him. According to one witness, Tulsi Ram, the only thing that was said of the time by one of the two Kanwars was that Badeshi men (meaning those who did not belong the Dhami State) should separate themselves from the rest of the crowd and this did not take more than a minute or so, and another witness named B. Narain Dass, President Dhami Praja Mandal denies having heard this though he was close by. It is proved that not more than 15 or 20 men at the utmost were outsiders.

All witnesses have unanimously stated that as soon as Thakur Bhag Mal and the policemen were separated from the crowd and had gone to a safe distance, without a word of warning and without any orders of dispersal of the crowd and inspite of the most peaceful attitude of it, volleys of stones, lathis and golies from the guns were showered upon the crowd. When the crowd began to run away, they were pursued by the assailants and many were wounded and some fell down. This process of showering of stones, lathis and golies continued according to different witnesses for a period estimated between 25 and 35 minutes.

The Rana, the two Kunwars, Tikhu Munshi, Anant Ram Modi, Devi Ram Khazanchi, Hari Saran Bakshi, Surat Singh, Mohan Singh and the son of the Jawala Singh are specially mentioned as having fired upon the crowd. According to their statements B. Narain Dass, Pt Tulsi Ram and some other witnesses were quite close to the place where Rana and his supporters were sitting and could observe the assailants. The number of guns is stated to be over 15.

7. Dhami State Trouble

Bombay Chronicle, 19 July 1939

17 July 1939

The following communiqué relating to the recent events in Dhami State is published:

On the 15th July the Rana of Dhami received a letter dated 14th July from a person styling himself, Secretary of the Dhami Riyasti Mandal, demanding, among other things, full Responsible Government and fifty per cent remission of land revenue in the State. The writer threatened that if a favourable reply was not received by the following evening, a deputation led by Bhagmal Southa would proceed from Simla to Dhami State. Bhagmal South is a subject of Jobbal State and the Secretary of the Himalaya Riyasti Praja Mandal at Simla.

The Dhami Darbar, apprehending that the entry of this person into the State would cause a breach of peace, issued an order under Section 144 of the State CrPC on 15th July prohibiting Bhagmal Southa from entering the State.

On the 16th July Bhagmal Southa with a following, composed mainly of persons who were not subjects of the Dhami State, arrived at the Dhami border and was informed by the State police of the order under Section 144. He declined to obey the order and deliberately courted arrest. The Dhami police had no option but to arrest him, and the police party, with their prisoner, then moved towards Halog, the State Capital, accompanied by a crowd which gradually increased until it numbered about 2,000 persons.

As it approached Halog, the Rana of Dhami sent two messages on separately stating that if his people had anything to represent to him he would gladly receive a deputation. A written request was then sent to the Rana asking him to receive a deputation under the leadership of a person who was not a State subject. While a reply to this request was being awaited, the police party, who were surrounded by the crowd, feared an attempt at rescue, moved with their prisoner towards the jail. This excited the crowd who shouted threats to burn the jail and the palace and finally attacked the police with sticks and stones.

By this time several hundred Dhami State subjects, resenting the interference of outsiders, had rallied to the support of the police and a melee ensued in which lathis and stones were freely used. The Magistrate, accompanying six policemen comprising the police escort, was himself injured. Seeing that the situation had become dangerous, he gave the order to the police to open controlled fire, commencing with blank cartridges as a warning.

It appears that in all 12 blank cartridges and 12 shot gun and buckshot cartridges were fired by the police. The casualties so far ascertained are one person killed and about thirty persons injured (the majority only slightly) from all causes. After the firing the crowd dispersed. Three persons were detained in custody.

The Political Agent¹ Punjab Hill States, left Simla the same evening for Dhami with a party of police and a doctor. The injured were given treatment on the spot and, where further treatment seemed necessary were dispatched to hospital at Simla. The situation is reported to be quiet.

¹ The Political Agent for Dhami was R.R. Burnett

8. The Dhami State Affairs: Amrit Kaur to Jawaharlal Nehru, 28 July 1939

SWJN, Vol. 2, pp. 117-19

My dear J.L.

You may have seen in the papers something about the recent firing that took place in Dhami State. Dhami is a tiny 'village kingdom', 12 miles from here, its population is about 5,000 souls, its revenue Rs 30,000 p.a. In common with all the poor subjects of these hill states, Dhami people also suffer from excess of land taxation, forced labour (*begar*), no schools little if any medical aid, poor quality of land which has recently been further handicapped as far as yielding capacity is concerned by either too much or too little rain, complete subjugation to the rulers' whims and fancies, illegitimate taxation of various kinds, etc.

A Himalaya States Praja Mandal has been in existence for the last eight months; I am told, but I have not heard myself of anything that they have done other than hold one conference at which Bhulabhai (Desai) presided last winter and nor am I acquainted with any of its members. In my efforts over many years to get better living conditions, better wages and more humanitarian treatment for the subjects of these hill states who come to Simla as rickshaw pullers and labourers every year I have never had any help from any quarter so that obviously the Mandal is not a body

that has attempted to work on these lines, at any rate, in Simla. The Congress President (Simla) and I were suddenly told one morning of the firing in Dhami. I went twice to see the wounded in hospital as well as the refugees. The latter are being fed and housed as best they can be in this rainy weather. My heart aches for them. I phoned the Resident whom I happen to know well and had some correspondence with him too. I have spoken to all the wounded (nine) in hospital and some of the less wounded outside as well as to many of the refugees. I have also elicited some evidence from rickshawmen who happened to take someone out to Dhami and got caught up in the crowd and were willy nilly witnesses to the firing. They are Kangra men and one of them is wholly reliable, having been known to me for many years. (These men will not give evidence in public—they will be too frightened to do so). Anyhow from the stories I have heard I am convinced that there was no reason for such protected firing as seems to have taken place—in fact I do not believe there was any rioting nor any need to fire. If the Rana had had the courage and sympathy to come out and assure the assemblage that he would receive a deputation of Dhami persons on that very day or on any other day all would have been well. But I feel he was annoyed and he wanted to shake the mailed fist in the faces of the ‘agitators’, hoping thereby to quell all agitation. Possibly, or even probably, he was frightened of a crowd numbering over 2,000 coming within a furlong of his palace and being capable of—had they so wished—overpowering the six policemen that are all he has to guard him!

As convinced as I am, however, of what I have said above I am equally certain that the 24 hours ultimatum to the Rana was a gross blunder. If these people boast of their belief in non-violence, as they say that they do, then I am convinced that their method of approach savoured of unadulterated violence and their refusal to admit their error shows they have not understood the A B C of ahimsa. Not to hit back when hit is not the only criterion of non-violence as these people seem to think. It is a pity—leaving non-violence aside for the moment—that people who are not capable of leading ask poor innocent persons to follow them with disastrous consequences. Such occurrences mean definite setbacks to the movement and should not be allowed. I feel that the State People Conference’s Central Committee should make it quite clear that all the various Praja Mandals in the States shall submit their plan of work and action and get their consent to the same before they launch out in adventures that may end in landing people generally into a mess.

I went to see Bapu in connection with Dhami to Delhi yesterday. He saw the Simla Congress Committee President and two Praja Mandal (Himalaya) members in my presence. He has sent them to you for guidance. He wanted me to send you his recent article which has reference to Dhami and also told me to write to you my reactions to the whole affair. I am quite sure that the whole plan was misconceived and mishandled. There were shouts of ‘Inqilab Zindabad’ in part of the Palace. Bhagmal deliberately courted arrest, he and two others in jail are now on hunger strike. Poor fellows, I do not know how they are and how to help them as no interviews are allowed.

I enclose you as much as I can in the way of relevant papers all the newspaper reports—the original statement the Praja Mandal wanted to issue—an extract of what I wanted them to add but which they refused to add after having told me on the phone that they had accepted it, the final draft of the statement which they say they have issued but which I have seen nowhere. I am sorry I cannot always get the truth from them. It is sickening. I am sure that I have had as much truth as it is possible to get on such occasions from the poor Praja. They are holding an enquiry just now presided over by L. Duni Chand of Ambala. Sautha—one of the two seeing you—is Bhagmal’s brother and says he is legal adviser to the Praja Mandal about which he does not know an awful lot. The Congress Committee there were never apprised of the resolutions passed or the action proposed to be taken. But after the affair was over Sautha is supposed to have complained that

Congress were not helping his brother! As a matter of fact all the relief work here and the setting up of the enquiry is all due to L. Shamlal, President of the Congress Centre here. You should send some one really reliable up here to advise the Mandal what to do in the present circumstances and what to do to avoid such unnecessary occurrences in the future.

I shall be in Wardha by 7 August at least and if you care to hear any more from me you shall. Please treat my correspondence with the Resident as strictly confidential. Bapu has seen it of course.

Love—Yours

Amrit

9. On Dhami State: M.K. Gandhi to Jawaharlal Nehru, 29 July 1939

CWMG, Vol. 25, pp. 111–14

My dear Jawaharlal,

Instead of guiding the Dhami people, I have passed them on to you. I feel that you should discharge this burden without any interference from me. The idea in the States seems to be to isolate and ignore the Congress and hence the States Congress. I have already suggested in *Harijan* that no State association or Mandal should act on its own without reference to your committee. I should act if at all through you i.e. when you refer to me, I should give my opinion as I do in respect of the WC I told the Gwalior people also likewise yesterday. You will have to reorganize your committee a bit if it is to function properly.

After all, I could not go to Kashmir. Sheikh Abdulla and his friends would not tolerate the idea of my being State guest. Banking on my past experience, I had accepted State offer in anticipation of S. Abdullah's approval, but I saw that I was mistaken. I, therefore, cancelled the acceptance of the State hospitality and accepted the Sheikh's. This embarrassed the state. So I cancelled the visit altogether. I was guilty of double stupidity in daring to think of going there without you and in not getting Sheikh's permission before accepting the State offer. I had thought that I would serve the people by accepting the state offer. I must confess that I was not pleased with my contact, the Sheikh and his friends they seem to all of us to be most unreasonable. Khan Saheb reasoned with them. But it was to no purpose.

10. M.K. Gandhi on lesson of Dhami

Harijan, 5 August 1939, *CWMG*, Vol. 70, pp. 75–76

Segaon
30 July 1939

We have not heard the last of Dhami. The truth is not yet out. The necessarily one-sided version of the Political Agent has been challenged by the Himalayan States Praja Mandal. Their statement shows how absolutely necessary it is to have an open judicial inquiry into the events that led to firing by the Rana of Dhami.

Some members of the Himalayan Mandal came to see me during my brief stay in Delhi. Dhami had made me think furiously. Was nothing possible to prevent such tragedy? I had much to say about it to the deputation, but I felt it would be wrong on my part to shoulder the burden of guiding the Himalayan States Praja Mandal. The responsibility was great. The issues at stake were equally great. I therefore felt that the matter should be handled not by me but by the Standing Committee of the All India States People's Conference. The question of the States is daily assuming

bigger and bigger proportions. The ruling Chiefs are becoming free with their rifles. They feel that they are safe so far as the Paramount Power is concerned. The Congress has not much prestige with them. Many of them are now evolving measures to crush the growing spirit of their people and make it impossible, if they can, for the Congress to give effective guidance to them, let alone to interfere. Nevertheless the Congress has a duty to perform. I do not exactly know the constitution of the Conference, but I presume that in some shape or other it is connected with the Congress. Anyway it is the only body which is specially designed for guiding the States people. It would be wrong for the States to resent such guidance. They should also realize that any resentment would be futile. The Congress cannot give up its duty of guiding the States people in the hour of their need. Time was when the Congress was guiding and protecting the rights of the States as against the Paramount Power. If the Congress friendship was desired and welcomed by the States in need, it hardly becomes them to demur at their people seeking Congress advice, guidance and protection. That the Congress may not always be able to give the people effective assistance is unfortunately too true. The Congress has to forge the necessary sanction by putting the organisation on a firmer footing and by wise restraint to acquire credit for impartiality and strictest justice. If the Congress is to discharge its function in a becoming manner, it will have to insist upon the workers learning to be more accurate than they have been hitherto in preparing their cases. In order to ensure accuracy, the Standing Committee will have to subject to strict scrutiny everything coming to it. If unchallengeable accounts of the doings in the States where even simple justice is denied are published, they will afford a foundation for action.

I have merely indicated a line of approach. The Standing Committee will no doubt lay down its own policy and method of dealing with problems as they arise from time to time. My object in writing these lines is to warn workers in the States against coming to me and expecting me to advise them. They should approach the Standing Committee. Even as I do not guide Congressmen on general matters falling within the function of the Working Committee but hold myself at the disposal of that body, no shall I henceforth act in respect of the new State problems. I may not give up guiding those with whom I am already directly concerned. I need hardly add that I shall continue to do what my special aptitude in matters affecting States may enable me to do without being involved in the general direction of popular movements in them. I would ask workers in the States not to take up any forward movement without previous reference to any sanction of the Standing Committee. It must be the duty of the Congress acting through the States People's Conference to avoid, if at all possible, a quarrel with the States.

11. Amrit Kaur to Jawaharlal Nehru, 30 July 1939

SWJN, Vol. 2, pp. 135-42

My dear J.L.

A few lines only in continuation of yesterday's letter.

I forgot to mention that I have heard consistently bad accounts of some of the main leaders of the Himachal Praja Mandal, such as financial stringency and collection of money from the Praja with no proper keeping of accounts, bad morals and attempts—sometimes successful—at blackmail in order to make money. God knows how far they are correct but consistent reports from all and sundry—interested and disinterested—cannot be dismissed as being without any foundation even if they are grossly exaggerated. I am telling you this so that you may tell whomever you depute to come up there to be as wise as a serpent. Congress (National) and the main States Conference must not get a bad name through persons who are not working to belong to either body.

I have private information that the Rana will not molest any of the refugees if they return, he will amply compensate the bereaved, he will promise to abolish such *begar* as still exists and raise the wages of labourers, he will not institute any cases against the "rioters". He maintains that the crowd was violent, that they tried to force an entrance into the palace, that inspite of a few blank cartridges being fired (the wounded also admit that some blank cartridges were fired to begin with) they did not disperse and that the main responsibility, therefore, lies on the Praja Mandal. He also says that the refugees here are being stopped from returning to Dhami by the Praja Mandal people. (This is true, in my opinion, to a large extent). He also says that while he will always listen to the just complaints of his own subjects he is not going to brook or bide instigators—for they are all self-seekers and men of no standing and no character and out for blackmail. He maintains that if he were to give them Rs 5,000 today they would at once come to terms with him.

Perhaps the States People's Conference depute may be able to get an interview with the Rana. If the Praja goes back the Rana says he will release the three arrested persons also and probably not institute cases against them either. As far as the land revenue is concerned he says it is outside his jurisdiction to reduce it.

Love, Yours in haste,

Amrit

The refugees' Land is not being looked after, they are not earning anything here either. In the end it is always these poor devils who suffer for the sins of others. It is a disgusting world. I wish I were not in it.

PATIALA

1. Constitutional Reforms in Patiala State

Article by Prof. Gulshan Rai, *Tribune*, 1 May 1939

1 May 1939

It is reported that His Highness the Maharaja of Patiala¹ has appointed a Committee to devise a scheme of constitutional reforms, in his State. A very large portion of the area of this State lies in the Sirhind and Malwa territories of the old Mughal province of Delhi. I took its rise during the reign of Emperor Mohammed Shah Rangila. Ala Singh,² the founder of Patiala, had conquered Barnala as early as 1718, and he had taken possession of Sirhind in 1731. That was before the invasion of Nadir Shah. During the Abdali invasions he consolidated his position, and in 1762 he was recognised Raja of Sirhind by Ahmad Shah Abdali. When he died in 1775, he was succeeded by his grandson, Amar Singh,³ who ruled only for six years. During his short reign he conquered Bhatinda, Faridkot, and Sirsa, in the west, and Ambala in the east. But during the reign of his weak successor, Sahib Singh, Patiala fell on evil days. Sirsa, Faridkot, and Ambala were lost. There was no fresh extension of territory right upto the time when the State was taken under the protection of the British Government in 1809.

At the present moment the Patiala State has got three different blocks of land, detached from one another. The main block lies in the center, and contains the districts of Patiala, Bhawanigarh, Barnala, and Bhatinda, sub-divided into 10 tahsils. There are two detached areas, that of Pinjour, with its headquarters Kandaghat, in the Simla Hills in the east, and that of Narnaul on the borders of Sandy Rajputana in the south. The former hill territories were acquired in recognition of the services done by the then Maharaja in 1815 in connection with the Nepalese War. The district of

Narnaul was obtained in recognition of the services rendered by the State in connection with the Sepoy mutiny of 1857. If any representative assembly is to be set up in Patiala, it is evident Pinjour in the hills, and Narnaul, in the southern arid tract, must be given separate representations, and these two blocks cannot be mixed up with the other territories in the main Central Block.

Representatives of Communities

Patiala State has a population of 16,25,250. There are in the State 6,32,972 Sikhs, 6.28,xxx Hindus and others, and 36,320 Muslims. The proportion in the general population of the Sikhs is 38.94 of the Hindus 8.67 and of the Muslims 22. 39. These figures mean that no particular community in the State possesses an absolute majority. Taken singly, every community in the State is in a minority. Under these circumstances the question of giving any weightage to any one particular community does not arise. If any two communities combine they can have an absolute majority in the Assembly. It would therefore be desirable that His Highness the Maharaja should in the new proposed Assembly give representation to every community in proportion to its population strength. That would prevent rousing heartburning in the different communities. The fixing of communal proportions in the different Provincial Assemblies has been a very difficult job, and in trying to give weightage to one minority or the other, we have caused an immense amount of communal tension. The grant of representation strictly in accordance with population strength will set all these troubles at rest.

Now take the representation of the different territorial blocks. The total population of Pinjour in the Simla Hills, is 55,638. This area contains 77 per cent Hindus. Unless the size of the Assembly is increased very much, Pinjour cannot be given more than one representative. It is evident this solitary representative of the Pinjour hills has to be a Hindu. Then take the Narnaul tract. The population of this area is 160,089. Here in this district the Hindus form 87.5 per cent of the total population. If 55,000 people in Pinjour have to be given one representative Narnaul cannot be given less than three, and all these 3 have to be Hindus. This disposes of the two detached blocks. The representation of these two blocks by representatives, means that the unit of representation must be in the neighbourhood of 50,000 population. The population of the main Central Block is 14,00,793. If the unit of representation is to be 50,000, then this block must be given 28 representatives. In this Central Block the Sikhs form 44.5 per cent of the population, the Hindus are 31.25 per cent, and the Muslims are 24.25 per cent. On this basis, the Sikhs are entitled to 12 seats, the Hindus 8 seats and the Muslims 7 seats. There is very little Sikh population in Narnaul, and a small Sikh population in Pinjour. So all the seats they are entitled to in the Assembly, may be given to the Sikhs of the Central Block. But the Muslims have a large population in Narnaul, which under any scheme of representation must go unrepresented, and they have a small population in Pinjour. If this population is taken into calculation, then on the basis of their total population in the State they are entitled to 8 seats. It would therefore be desirable to give the Muslims all the 8 seats they are entitled to, in the Central Block. The proposed number 21 for election will have therefore to be increased to 32.

The real problem is how to distribute the 28 seats in the Central Block so as to give 12 seats to the Sikhs, 8 seats to the Hindus, and 8 seats to the Muslims. It is reported that His Highness the Maharaja had decided to introduce joint electorates for the representation of different communities. If the electorates are constructed on the basis of property qualification, it would be found very difficult to reflect population strengths of the different communities in their exact proportion in the electorate, for the simple reason, that the economic position of the different communities is not on the same level. And yet it is obvious that unless communal proportions in the general population are reflected in the electorate, the different communities cannot on the basis of joint

electorates get representation in the Assembly in proportion to their population strengths. What is then to be done under these circumstances? We in British India have not so far solved this problem. Sir Sikandar Hayat shortly after assuming office, appointed a Unity Conference. The Political Sub-Committee of this Conference was entrusted with the task of constructing Constituencies for the Provincial Assembly on the basis of joint electorates. In this connection I had to requisition a large number of statistics, which involved the compilation of population and voting strength figures of the different zails and thanas in the province. I am persuaded to think that the different communities cannot be given representation in proportion to their population with a franchise constructed on the basis of property qualifications, and joint electorates.

Direct Election

What is then the solution? I should think we should give up the system of direct election, so far at any rate as the State or provincial assemblies are concerned. We will have to give up direct elections not only for the sake of giving proportional representation to all the communities, but also in order to remove corruption and avoid the rise of political caucuses in the political life of this country. The short experience of direct elections in the country during the last 19 years has shown that the grant of vote to the ordinary man in the street for the purpose of electing representatives to the national assemblies has brought into power either unscrupulous stage managers, or dictatorial party demagogues. I am quite sure that an average voter does not understand the political issues on which elections to the national assemblies are fought. So they have either to sell their votes or to be influenced by platform speakers. It has also brought another evil. Under a system of direct elections, and low property franchise, only he can win elections, who has a long purse. Such a system cannot help the establishment of a democracy, it only subjects the people to a system of plutocracy. Even in the Congress organisation, Mahatma Gandhi and other Congress leaders complain there is a good deal of corruption in the election of different Congress bodies. The voters' registers of the Congress are said to contain many bogus names. Many Congressmen are of opinion that for several reasons direct elections for all representatives bodies are not suitable.

I am not opposed to adult franchise or, better still, household franchise. Let every head of a family vote for the election of village panchayats, and mohalla wards in towns. The simple problems facing the village population or a mohalla can be well understood by every man or woman in the street. But when we come to town committees or tahsil rural boards, the franchise should be possessed not by every householder, but by the member of the ward councils, or village panchayats. When we come to the election of the State Assembly, the franchise should be given not to householders directly, but to the members of the town committees and tahsil rural boards. Under this system the voter for every representative body will understand the problems coming up before these bodies. It would then be possible for the voters to exercise their votes intelligently. Under this system it would be possible to have such a composition of the Assembly electorate as to reflect the population strengths of the different communities and thus facilitate proportional representation of the different communities.

There is one other point I would like to raise in connection with the representation of the people in Patiala State. His Highness has clearly decided in favour of joint electorates so far as religious communities are concerned. So far so good. But I would suggest that the mischievous system of making distinction between rural and urban areas should also be avoided. The urban areas cannot live without the help of people living in rural areas, and the economic condition of village people cannot be improved without the cooperation of city people. The people living in urban and rural areas should not be shut up in water-tight electrical compartments, but should be

encouraged to work in cooperation with one another. I hope, His Highness the Maharaja will decide in favour of joint electorates for urban and rural people, also.

¹ Yadavendra Singh.

² Ala Singh (1691–1765); founder of Patiala House, accepted the title of Raja and a court dress from Ahmad Shah Durani, the Afgan Chief who appeared almost annually to challenge the Sikhs in the 1750s and 1760s.

³ Raja Amar Singh b. 1748, succeeded 1765, died 1782.

2. Constitutional Reforms in Patiala State

Tribune, 18 May 1939

I have read with great attention Professor Gulshan Rai's article regarding the proposed reforms in Patiala State in the 'Tribune' of 1st May 1939. It purports to advocate the cause of Hindus and aims at giving to them more than they deserve in view of their economic position in Patiala State. Two points in the article stand out prominently, one is about discarding the Principle of property qualifications of voters and the second is the suggestion regarding indirect election through town committees and Tehsil rural boards, ostensibly because the Maharaja of Patiala has decided to introduce the joint electorates and the voting strength of the Sikhs even according to the very strict qualifications in their case, has been returned as 50 per cent a result of which the Sikhs would have the greatest say in the elections.

This gratuitous advice of his would have sounded sweet if he had not taken a partisan view of the situation, but alas it is calculated to whittle down the position of the Sikhs in the State. If the Sikhs, the single majority community, holds the biggest property status it does not stand to reason that they should be deprived of the rights accruing there from by enhancing the voters' qualifications in their case and thus diminishing their voting strength. It would interest Professor Gulshan Rai to know that the Sikhs question the correctness of the Census figures of 1931¹, as the majority of persons employed in connection with the preparation of returns in rural and urban areas were Hindus. It was astounding to find that during the preparation of tentative electoral rolls many Sikhs were returned as Hindus; many cases in Tehsil Sirhind were proved to the hilt and this disturbed the minds of not a few.

According to the present tentative qualifications for voters, the Sikhs command absolute electoral majority in the State.

Now a Franchise Committee has been appointed with a view to reflect the population strength of various communities in the electoral rolls which could adversely affect the cause of the Sikhs because every attempt is being made to decrease the number of Sikh voters who have already been returned in a majority. The learned Professor himself admits and with which I also agree that no electoral rolls can be possible which can represent the population strength of all communities in Patiala, because the economic conditions of the Sikhs here is much superior. Why should therefore, such a formula be found out that would internationally diminish the position of the Sikhs who unmistakably hold the largest stake in the State? This is sheer injustice and is tantamount to make an uncalled for invidious distinction between Hindus and Sikhs regarding qualifications of voters and is not only against all canons of justice but is also preposterous. Voters' qualifications should be uniform in all cases and the representation in the assembly should be strictly according to the stake of various communities.

The article proposes to divide Patiala into two parts of the Muslim idea or Pakistan and the other were the Hindus alone would ruler (Pinjour and Narnaul, though given to the State in

recognition of the meritorious services of the Sikh army) and the rest of the State to be divided among the Sikhs, Hindus and the Muslims.

The Sikhs acquired Narnaul by shedding their blood but Professor Gulshan Rai wants it to be quietly handed over to the Hindus alone.

I would beseech the Maharaja of Patiala to wait and see what the Muslim with 10.5 per cent population get population get in Hyderabad and with less than 25 per cent in Bhopal and Hindus with less than 20 per cent in Kashmir and give to the Sikhs on the same principle. The Sikhs claim 39 per cent of the population 56 per cent voting strength, even allowed by the Hidayat of 1935 against which they have lodged a protest, and about 80 per cent stake on the basis of property and contribution to the State exchequer.

The Sikhs of Patiala assure the sister communities that they desire to keep the same cordial relations with them as has been the case hitherto, they claim only their right when they demand an absolute majority in the proposed Assembly because of their political and economic position in the State though, on the analogy of Hindu and Muslim States, they can claim more than what they demand at Present.

Kartar Singh²
Secretary Sri Guru Singh Sabha
Patiala

According to the 1931 Census, the religious composition of the Patiala population was 38.2% Hindus, 38.9% Sikhs and 22.4% Muslims.

² Kartar Singh Jhabbar (1874–1962) educated at Gurmot Vidyalaya at Amritsar; took to preaching Sikhism; took part in Rowlatt Agitation, arrested and released in 1920; took part in Gurdwara Reform Movement, arrested in 1925 till 1928; arrested in 1935 and would have been hanged but for intervention of Maharaja of Patiala, after this led quiet life in village devoting himself to religion and Guru Singh Sabha.

3. Shamsher Singh Gill¹ to General Secretary,² AISPC, 4 June 1939

AISPC Papers, File No. 181, 1939 (Pt. II), NMML

Dear Sir,

During the month of 1939, news of some political activities in some 780 villages of Patiala State and the excesses of the Patiala State Police upon the peaceful villagers, were conveyed to me, but at the time, my hands were too full with my own political activities in connection with the Kalsia State movement and I could not proceed to the villages in Patiala State to obtain a personal knowledge of the happenings. But I kept myself in touch with day to day occurrence there. By the beginning of June news became so alarming that several cases of rape committed by the Patiala State Police on the respectable satyagrahi women of the villages were brought to me by the persons who were watching the movement, and I could not help for asking my other political engagements and proceeded to the spot to see the things for myself. Consequently, I reached there on the 11th June and went round several villages situated within the Zone of the Patiala State Tenants Agitation, and met several responsible men those connected with the agitation as well as impartial onlookers of the locality I made the following observations:

Background & History of the Movement: According to the system prevalent in these villages from the last half a century or so, the Jagirdars collect in kind one third of the total yield of crop from the tenants. The assessment of this one third of the quantity to be realised from each tenant is not determined after the crops are actually harvested but when the crop are still unripe and standing in the fields. A little before the crops are ready for harvesting the village patwari visits the

fields and making a forecast estimate of the crop the fields in that condition is expected to yield, determine the quantity of the crop which the jagirdar would receive after harvesting. The tenant has to disburse this quantity, no matter, the actual yield after the crops are harvested, may be half as much as estimated by the patwari. Be it mentioned that the collectors of the Jagirdars—Mukhtiyars—do realise more quantity than the one determined by the patwari if he finds that the total produce of fields have been more than the one estimated by the Patwari and instances in which enhanced quantities have been realised from the tenants are not wanting. But whereas such instances are numerous that the actual produce of the fields have been less than the quantity estimated by the patwari, the instance that the collectors in such cases should have realised less quantities than those determined by the patwari i.e. their actual one third of the total produce, are not available.

Apart from other deceptions practiced on the illiterate tenants at the time of collecting the batai, this one fact alone is by no means a source of any small amount of injustice and hardship to the oppressed tenants. More often than not, they have to pay more than one third of their total produce. Moreover, even the justice of Jagirdar's share is questionable in this age and in these hard times of all round depression the peasants can ill afford it. Be it added for information that even the Canal Water charges are to be paid by the Tenants and notwithstanding the orders of the late Maharaja to the effect that 1/3rd Canal Water Charges should be paid by the Jagirdars, they have not cared to comply with these orders from the last several years and the poor peasants have to submit to this atrocity as well and pay the whole canal water charges from their own pockets.

The tenants resent their batai system very much and insist upon paying land revenue according to the scales prevalent in the territory in its stead. And in fact this batai system in itself is not an original thing. It was imposed upon them forcibly, much against their wishes in the early sixties of the eighteenth century. Before 1861 the tenants were paying land revenue according to the rate then prevalent. But in or about 1861 these villages were granted to the Jagirdars by the British Government in recognition of their meritorious services rendered by them to the Englishman in suppressing the Indian patriots in their war of freedom in 1857. After the change of hands of these villages the land revenue system was abolished and the batai system was introduced. Be it mentioned that the tenants are Mauroosies.

The tenants never accepted this system willingly and ever since its adoption, their protest has been finding its vent in one or the other form from time to time. Some seventeen years ago their protest assumed a gigantic proportion. The tenants who had so far worked individually or at the most in small village units decided to take some forceful concerted action. This was the time of political awakening throughout India. They organised themselves and mustered their strength. But their strength was yet raw when the blow fell and they were crushed with brutal force. And also, there was no seasoned person to lead them successfully. The movement failed and there followed a period of a comparative inertia and it was a few years before the next agitation broke out again. But chiefly this was confined to meetings, petitions and to small demonstrations off and on. This sort of agitation went on in 780 villages of the three tehsils of Patiala State for some years.

Exhausted and disappointed by these measures the tenants decided at last to take some more vigorous steps to realise their legitimate right. Towards the close of the last year the tenants organised their committee on stronger lines and sent the ultimatum to the authorities that if the batai system was not abolished, they would refuse to pay it and start satyagrah. Finding no response from the authorities they launched their great armless defensive in April this year at the time of Batai. Men, Women and Children all took part in the Satyagrah. The tenants in 780 villages offered satyagraha and refused to pay batai. The jagirdars invoked aid of the Patiala State Police who took the matters in their own hands Satyagrahis were arrested, maltreated, beaten and dragged. The locks of the

granaries were broke open, residential quarters were searched and all the corn carried away forcibly.

During the raids of the police in all these villages, severe beating to men, women and children alike, was quite a common spectacle, and an ordinary occurrence. The number of the injured satyagrahis jumps well above a thousand. Another matter of common occurrence during these police raids was that in most of the case the whole of the corn found in any one particular place was carried away by the police notwithstanding the fact that the share of the jagirdar from that one particular tenant was much less than the corn actually carried away. And the excuse given for this atrocity was that the corn were due from that person for the past fasal or previous years. In many cases not a single grain is left for the use of the tenant and his family and in actual fact many persons are starving.

The most dark side of the activities of the police during these raids is said to be their dishonourable behaviour towards the women-folk. It is alleged that at several villages the police took under custody some women satyagrahies and brought them to their camps and behaved with them in the most ignominious way. I have it on the authority of mukhtiar, a paid servant of the Jagirdar who was assisting the police in their raids, that at several camps rape has actually been committed on several women. In some cases the women did not even report this matter to their husbands for fear of their infamy and shame. But at some villages the women reported the matter to their husbands and this thing so incensed the villagers that they were on the point of bidding farewell to this accursed non-violence and there was a likelihood of bloodshed. But wiser counsels prevailed and the matter did not take an ugly turn. In one village, it is reported that a police constable pulled out the azarband of a woman satyagrahi in an open crowded bazar before the people; her pyjama slipped down and she was left naked before the public. At another place it is reported that the lehnga of a woman was held high up in the air leaving her thighs and legs naked and visible. On enquiries being made about the occurrences of rape and other similar things meted out to womenfolk, confirmation in the subdued tones are received but usually the satyagrahies themselves keep mum about them. The most they say is '*Baba hamri izzat ka maumla hai, kia batain*'—It is a matter of our family honour, what should we tell? The public at large is much frightened and the tenants in particular are severely panic-stricken and talk about the atrocity of the police only in hushed voices. Several hundred tenants have left their homes and are at present residing in the adjoining British territory. Many people are implicated in false cases and proceedings against the tenants on made up cases are instituted.

All that has happened and is happening in Patiala State is so very serious and alarming that it seems to me, that the All India States People's conference must take this matter in their own hands, and I therefore, request you to place this matter before the meeting of the Standing Committee for the appointment of a Committee of Enquiry to go through the Patiala State Tenants' Agitation and do all that could possibly be done to help them.

I may also add that the Punjab Press has given a cold face to this agitation and in most of the cases the news published were perverted and mutilated to suit their own interests which undoubtedly are allied with the ruling class.

Hoping to be excused for this trouble and thanking you in an advance,

Yours Faithfully,
Sd/-
Vill. Budhsinghwala
Ilaqa Charik
PO Moga (Ferozepur)
Punjab.

¹ Shamsher Singh Gill, Member, Standing Committee of AISPC, constituted in February, 1939 from Punjab.

² This could be to any of the 3 General Secretaries of AISPC—Balwant Rai Mehta, Jainarayan Vyas or Rangildas Kapadia.

4. Statement by Darbara Singh on Grievances of Peasants in Patiala State

AISPC Papers, File No. 139, 1939, NMML

Budhlada
11 December 1939

Dear Sir,

I shall be highly obliged, if you kindly give publication in your esteemed paper of the following facts:

For long in Patiala State there have been disputes between the so-called Biswedars and the tenants over the proprietary rights of such Biswedars. These disputes led to innumerable hardships for the *Kisans*. Authorities sided with the Biswedars. Additional police has been enlisted. They, with the aid of the hirelings, perpetrated every kind of heinous wickedness, atrocities and cruelties on the poor ignorant peasantry. Virgins were indiscriminately raped in broad day light before the very eyes of their parents and brothers. Boys of tender age were mercilessly beaten before the very eyes of their mothers and sisters to extort money for the landlords. They were kept in unlawful detention in some villages for more than a week. In the meantime they were tortured by many ways. Under such circumstances in thousands *kisans* deserted their villages, and are passing now their days in exile, leaving their families at the mercy of police and their hirelings. Their cattle for want of fodder, water, and care, died in scores. Their dead bodies were not allowed even to be removed from their homes by the police.

Under such unbearable conditions a *kisan* deputation waited on the Resident of the Punjab State at Simla on 21st 1939, he gave the deputation a patient hearing. Consequently HH the Maharaja of Patiala on 27th July appointed a commission to enquire into the causes of disputes between the Biswedars and occupancy tenants with unsatisfactory terms of reference.

Repression again in this crop of Kharif reached the culmination. So a batch of 200 *kisans* again in the first week of November 1939 marched to Lahore to put their grievances and hardships before the Resident¹. The Secretary to the Resident in a statement to the press that appeared in the *Tribune* dated 1st December stated: 'It is out of question for the Resident to receive further deputation from the tenants before the commission has submitted its report, while the whole question is under consideration of His Highness' Government'.

On a peaceful rally of *Kisans* an order under Section 144 CrPC was served by additional Magistrate Lahore on 5th December. The *Kisan* have obeyed and left for their respective homes. But many of them when they reached home fell in the hands of police and were mercilessly belaboured.

More than 300 *Kisans* are in Patiala Jail and so many are being prosecuted. About 500 warrants have been issued to arrest the *Kisans* who are passing their days in exile leaving their families at the mercy of the police and their hirelings. A copy of the demands of the *Kisan* Committee is sent herewith. Records in detail of the atrocities committed on the *Kisans* will be submitted to you as early as possible. Hoping that you will give due consideration to the publication of our demands in your paper.

Some of the major demands of the *Kisans* may be mentioned as to give an idea of their grievances:

1. That land revenue should be realised from the villages as was the custom before and the *Kisans* in these villages be recorded as full owners of their holdings.
2. That the present system of appraisalment through Kankut Committees should be abolished. The tillers should not in any case be required to pay more than the amount of land revenue and other cesses. That the revenue so realised be disbursed in any way or paid to any person, whether Biswedars or others.
3. That the *Kisans* should have proportionate share in *shamlat* and other village wastes.
4. That persons shown as tenants of whatever description should be treated as absolute owners as they used to be before the first settlement.
5. That the rule of escheat should be brought in line with one prevailing in the Punjab; Biswedars should in no case succeed in preference to the ruler.
6. That the persons arrested and detained in connection with the trouble arising out of the refusal by the *Kisans* to give share of the Biswedars should be released and the pending prosecutions be withdrawn and suits stayed till the report of the Commission.
7. That the members of the *Kisan* Committee should not be victimized and proceeded against on their return to villages; and that persons responsible for organising the movement should be allowed to enter the State and all notices etc. issued against them be withdrawn.
8. That the moveable properties of the *Kisans* auctioned or sold or forcibly taken possession of should be returned or adequate compensation paid therefore.
9. That the *Kisans* should be allowed to represent and defend their cases by any person from outside the state as they desire, and their counsel should be given facilities to inspect Revenue and other relevant papers and take copies of documents required for their defence without any fees and charges.
10. That the *Kisan* Muzara Committee be recognised as a representative body to represent *Kisans* in all the Biswedari villages in the State.
11. That the Lambardars should not exclusively be appointed from the Biswedars who are often absent, and entrust these duties with irresponsible persons and often loafers. Moreover, all Lambardars should not go to Biswedars, but *Kisans* should also have their Lambardars.
12. All petitions and representations having failed, the *Kisans* were forced to direct action; the countrywide economic awakening and other world factors occupied with the ruthless repression in the State, the halting and hesitating pronouncement by the Government, promising Reforms, had its natural effect in a giving a fresh impetus to their lost hopes. They decided to reorganised their scattered forces for pressing their legitimate demands long overdue.
13. This could not escape the notice of authorities who tried to suppress the rising tides. There was a crop of cases and the vocal elements were extensively roped in. The outburst was characteristically agrarian and economic. Forces were requisitioned in the name of

law and order. There were house searches, *lathi* charges, firings, prosecutions and imprisonments and, scores of lives were lost and hundreds placed behind the bars. Ladies were assaulted and disgraced.

14. Moved by unprecedented repressions, and disappointed at the apathetic attitude of His Highness, some of the more sacrificing workers among the *Kisans* migrated to the adjoining places in the Punjab districts and continued their struggles from outside. The intrigue of the State officials succeeded at the beginning in preventing their conferences being held in the adjoining places in the Punjab. Such tactics later proved abortive and several meetings took place for not giving any share of the produce or pay its money equivalent to the Biswedars. It was further decided to pay land revenue to the State that they used to do 40 years before. The story of their Jatha marching on foot to Simla, ... the stopping of their Jatha and committing untold atrocities on them require separate treatment and will be submitted in detail on the proper occasion.

¹ C.P. Skrine became Resident for Punjab from July 1939

MALERKOTLA, FARIDKOT, ETC.

1. Situation at Faridkot: Rulia Singh Burqari, President, Faridkot State Congress Praja Mandal, to the General Secretary, AICC, 5 September 1939
AICC Papers, File No. G-12/1937-39, NMML

I have been informing you, every now and then the hardships being experienced by the Congress workers and the general public at the hands of the Faridkot State Police, but the recent inhuman and merciless beating given by the police to the volunteers and the attending public at the time of hoisting National Flag at Kot Kapura deserved your immediate attention.

On 27th August 1939 the Faridkot State Congress Praja Mandal arranged hoisting the National Flag at Kapura. A good gathering was present at the time, when the police fiercely and rashly beat them. They fell unconscious and were dragged to the jail and some of them were thrown in the pits of the state roads etc. A detailed information is available in the attached pamphlet.

The Congress arranged a private interview with the prisoners who explained that they were threatened and forced to apologize against Gandhi's policy and the Congress or would be beaten likewise daily. Meal is also supplied once in a day.

Under the circumstances the prisoners could not help resorting to hunger strike. Today is the 6th day for them. Nominally they are asked to take meal, but on their refusal to accept it they are beaten by the sweepers. No relative is allowed to meet them. All these facts have been narrated by a criminal prisoner who works in the state garden.

The public is passing through very odd circumstances and nobody hears them. I have informed the Maharaja,¹ AGG,² Punjab State and the Punjab Provincial Congress Committee through wire.

I, therefore, request that the said facts may kindly be considered in the forthcoming meeting of the Working Committee and the State Public may be helped. A camp for the State exile prisoners

has been opened at Ferozepore City and all communications may kindly be sent through the Ferozepore District Congress Committee, Ferozepore City, Punjab.

Yours respectfully,

¹ Harinder Singh Brarbans Bahadur, b. 1915; succeeded to the throne of Faridkot, 1918; assumed full ruling powers on 17 October 1931; educated at Atchison Chief's College, Lahore; military training at Poona with the Royal Deccan Horse; married daughter of Bhagwant Singh Saheb of Bhareli, Ambala District.

² C.P. Skrine.

2. Hardships at Malerkotla: Mangal Singh¹ to Rajendra Prasad, 20 September 1939

AICC Papers, File No. G-12, 1937-39

Ludhiana

20 September 1939

Excuse me for encroaching on your valuable time when, I know you are busy in solving bigger questions. But having realised the hardships of the people of the Malerkotla State I am constrained to trouble you with the letter drawing your immediate attention to the grievances of the people of this State.

The story of the hardship under which these people are suffering from a long time is really sad. The land revenue demand is thrice as high as that of British India. The land is forfeited to the State in case the owner dies interstate. There is another heavy tax known as "Han-Na" (Yes or No) on any sale or mortgage of land which is usually from 20 per cent to 25 per cent on every transaction. The corruption, begar and illegal extortions and zulam are prevalent in the State. As a result of these evils the people of the State are backward and crushed down by poverty and ignorance.

There is absolutely no civil liberty worth the name. Under the repressive laws such as the famous Hidayat² (1933) the State enjoys unlimited powers to suppress the people. These powers are freely and ruthlessly used.

In last July the State subjects arranged a Conference at the village Kothala over which I was to preside and which was to be addressed by several other MLAs. Over a dozen Congress workers including myself reached Malerkotla on the 16th July 1939. Our entry was prohibited under Section 144, and on our ignoring the notice we were all arrested but released after the time the Conference was over. Three officials of the reception committee who had already been arrested were not released. They demanded an open trial, a lawyer of their choice and facilities for interview for the purpose of preparation of their defence, but their reasonable requests were all refused and they were sentenced to one year RI after a farce of a Trial was gone through. The three prisoners are on hunger strike since the 10th August and they are being forcibly fed. The Ludhiana Congress Committee deputed three gentlemen to request the prisoners to break the hunger strike but they were not allowed to see them.

After this, the agitation carried on by means of posters and leaflets by the State workers from outside the State. But now they had started taking reprisals against the workers whom they suspect to be leaders of the movement. They have recently forfeited the property of Pt Bindaban, President of the State Committee, and the manner in which they have carried it out is most inhuman and revolting. The ladies of the house were rudely asked to clear out and a request for a change of the dress was bluntly refused. Even a toy from the hands of a weeping child was snatched away and a school boy was not allowed to have his exercise book on which he was doing his task allotted to

him for the summer vacations. Apart from the family of Pt Bindaban, his widowed sister-in-law was also living in the house. Her money and jewellery were also taken away in spite of protests. Besides an ancestral house and a large amount of luggage, furniture and utensils, and cash and jewellery amount to Rs 800, and 40 tolas gold and 52 tolas silver were also confiscated and taken away. The most extraordinary thing is that the property was confiscated on the 7th September although the time limit put by the State was to expire on the 30th September.

Now the police is carrying on a regular campaign of terrorism in the State. The respectable people are publicly insulted and humiliated. Some of them were arrested and beaten and then released. I have now learnt that the police has arrested a minor school boy who was beaten by them. His only offence is that he is a younger brother of B. Lachhman Das Gupta, Financial Secretary of the State Committee.

Great excitement prevails in the State under these circumstances. I would request you to pay personal and immediate attention to this question. My humble suggestion in this matter is that you should issue a press statement about these complaints and depute someone on behalf of the State's People's Conference to seek interview with the hunger strikers and make personal enquires on the spot. After receiving his report you may take further such action as may be deemed necessary.

¹ Secretary, Central Sikh League in 1928; Member, Subjects Committee Meeting, Tripuri Congress, 11 March 1939, moved an amendment to a resolution proposed by Jawaharlal Nehru.

² Hidayat 1933 is a law which denies fundamental civil liberties of organisation, platform and speech to the people.

3. On the Ludhiana Conference

Secret Letter from the Central Intelligence Office, 11 November 1939, File No. 6(3)-P(S), Punjab State Archives

11 November 1939

Secret Report

Owing to the outbreak of war and the feeling that State's people should voice their opinion in future policy in this respect, the Punjab Riasti Praja Mandal has very recently recommended its activities. On the 28th and 29th of October 1939 the Working Committee held a meeting, twelve out of nineteen members being present when a resolution was passed to the effect that the Punjab branch fully supported the statement issued¹ by the Standing Committee of the AISPC in October, the 11th 1939, and would follow the lead of its President, Pt Jawaharlal Nehru. A detailed examination of the financial position of the organisation was made. The accounts roughly show that the income to date is rupees 8,000 and expenditure nearly rupees six thousand.

Another meeting of the Working Committee was held in Ludhiana on the 5th November 1939. Talib Hussain² of Malerkotla was elected Vice-President and Tirath Singh of Patiala General Secretary. The Committee then turned its attention to discussions on the war situation, where upon it was agreed that the Punjab Riasti Praja Mandal should follow the lead given by the Congress High Command. After much argument, a War Committee of three persons was formed to organise subordinate branches in the States, to collect funds to enlist volunteers and to make preparation for the impending civil disobedience movement. This was committee of Sewa Singh of Bapla, Malerkotla State, Sunderlal, Pleader, and Wazir Singh Dardi of Patiala State was empowered to nominate dictators who would carry on the work of the committee should the members be arrested. In view of the likelihood of the arrest of members of this Working Committee and the confiscation

of the party's funds, it was agreed that all monies belonging to the organisation should be withdrawn from the Punjab National Bank and held privately by Achint Ram, Amar Singh or Karam Singh.

¹ See above in All India States People's Conference file: 'State Peoples Conference, Wardha', 11 October 1939.

² Talib Hussain, Member of the Standing Committee of AISPC, 1939.

III RAJPUTANA: JAIPUR

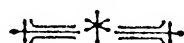
1. Ban on Jamnalal Bajaj

Editorial entitled 'Needless Provocation', *Hindustan Times*, 1 January 1939

The Jaipur ban on Seth Jamnalal Bajaj appears to us an act of needless provocation. He was going there, not to organise civil disobedience or preach no-taxation, but to attend a routine meeting of the Working Committee of the Jaipur Praja Mandal. The Jaipur administration, moreover, cannot be unaware that, during the troublous days of the Sikar conflict, Seth Jamnalal Bajaj threw all the weight of his influence on the side of peaceful negotiation and did all he could to prevent a delicate situation from developing into a catastrophe. Since then, he has been exerting his energies to find a peaceful solution for the problem of civil liberties and populate government in Jaipur. The administration of Jaipur is not conducted on such a high level of efficiency as to make the Durbar immune from the embarrassment of popular agitation. On the other hand, the people have grievances to justify agitation on the scale we are witnessing in other Indian States. But, if Jaipur has so far been spared such troubles, it is because the Praja Mandal in the State believes in friendly settlement of such disputes in States, and not in the precipitation of conflicts between the ruler and the ruled.

The action taken by the Jaipur Durbar also comes at a most untimely moment. Events in most Indian States which, till a few days back, appeared to be heading towards a disaster of tragic dimensions, have suddenly taken a more helpful turn, mainly due to the wise counsel of Gandhiji, who called a halt to direct action methods just to give the Princes a chance of making a gesture, on their own initiative, to satisfy the claims of their subjects. Why the Jaipur Durbar should have chosen this time to ban the entry of Seth Jamnalal Bajaj would be most difficult to explain except by the fact that the Present Prime Minister of the State¹ has perpetrated similar follies before. Why on earth the Durbar has not found it possible to replace him by a competent and enlightened Indian is one of the mysteries of Jaipur. Seth Jamnalal Bajaj deserves to be congratulated on not forcing a crisis by defying the order immediately, as he could easily have done. But we in Delhi will be interested to know whether this ban was a spontaneous ebullition of statesmanship in Jaipur or folly inspired by the Political Department.

¹ Oliver Charles Beauchamp St. John B. 1907; education: Charterhouse; R.M.C., Sandhurst. XXth Lancers, I.A. 1928-32; Indian Political Service 1932-47; Assistant Private Secretary to Viceroy 1932-34; Prime Minister Alwar State 1936; Political Agent, Western Kathiawar 1937; Prime Minister, Jaipur 1939; Secretary to Governor, NWFP 1942-46.



2. Jaipur Rajya Praja Mandal Resolutions

Praja Mandal, Jaipur, File No. 29A, Pt 2, 1939, NMML

1 January 1939

The Working Committee of the Jaipur Rajya Praja Mandal has given full consideration to the report submitted personally by Sjt Hiralalji Shastri¹ about severe famine conditions prevailing in Shekawati and elsewhere in the State and the relief work organized by the Praja Mandal Famine Relief Sub-committee with the financial help received from the Rajputana Famine Relief Society and other donors and in co-operation with the Shekhawati Kisan Panchayat.

This Committee is of the opinion that, apart from the relief work carried on by the Jaipur Government or public bodies, it would be necessary for the Thikandars to adjust their demand in proportion to the actual product in each village and to make liberal remissions in the Lagaan, including the foregoing of the entire demand in the case of villages where there has been a complete failure of the crops.

This Committee records its strong protest against the unnecessary and uncalled for regulation published in an extra-ordinate issue of the Jaipur Gazette, dated the 16th December 1938, the provisions of which are very wide and according to which it may be quite easy for Petty Police officials—even those of the rank of Head Constables—to implicate any person working amongst the Kisans. This Committee feels that the passing of such regulation is not at all the proper method to deal with an emergency arising out of abnormal famine conditions and that, further, this Committee suspects that the regulation may have been inspired by some ulterior motive. Even before the passing of the said regulation reports have been received in the Praja Mandal Office about unlawful acts of injustice and atrocity committed by certain employees of the Jaipur Police, who, according to the reports, have been going far out of their way to help the Thikanadars in the realization of excessive *lagaan*. This Committee, therefore, hopes that an immediate and impartial inquiry will be held into the allegations against the Police Officers concerned and that the guilty persons will be properly dealt with.

¹ Hiralal Shastri: b. 1899; education: Jobner High School; joined Maharaja's College, Jaipur; BA from Allahabad University; joined Jaipur State Service in 1921; resigned in 1927 and became acquainted with socio-political work of Sabarmati Ashram in 1927-28; founded 'Jiwan Kirtir' in 1929 for upliftment work in Banasthali Village near Jaipur; organized Jaipur Rajya Praja Mandal and worked for establishing a responsible Government; General Secretary, Jaipur Praja Mandal; 1942 led People's Satyagraha in Jaipur; General Secretary, All India States People's Conference; 1st Mukhya Sachiv of Responsible Government in Jaipur, 1948; Supported Sardar Patel in bringing about integration of Princely States of Rajputana.

3. Ban on Jamnalal Bajaj: G.D. Birla to Gandhi, 1 January 1939

G.D. Birla, *Bapu: A Unique Association*, Vol. 3, Bombay, 1977, pp. 207-08

Pujya Bapu,

Jamnalalji returned from Sawai Madhopur to this place. Number of friends were also invited from Jaipur to review the position. After hearing everything, I thought it necessary to see Glancey. I did not know him before. But at my request he immediately granted me an interview although he was going on tour in a day or so. I explained the whole position to Glancey. He asked a number of questions about Jamnalalji, but to my great surprise I found that he had nothing to say against him, and yet he had got the ban imposed. In fact he asked me what was against Jamnalalji, and I told him that the funniest part of the whole business was this that while neither Jaipur nor Delhi

had anything against Jamnalalji yet they have imposed this ban. I told him that Jamnalalji would not obey the order indefinitely. He has promised to reconsider the position. I cannot say what he will do because he did not give out his mind at all. He made a remark that Jamnalalji acted very wisely in obeying the order. This remark added with the fact that he had nothing against Jamnalalji may lead us to the inference that he will withdraw the ban. I have also again written to the Viceroy and let us hope for the best.

My advice was sought by Jamnalalji and I have given him the following advice:

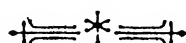
As regards the ban he should address a letter to the Jaipur authorities and give them sufficient time to withdraw the ban. If they do not comply with his suggestions, then after a certain period he should definitely break it.

But I have suggested to him that his breaking the ban should not be the beginning of a mass satyagraha. I am not ignorant about the situation in Jaipur and while I know that hundreds are very eager to start satyagraha there, I do not think there are even half a dozen persons who have imbibed the spirit of satyagraha. They are very eager to break the law just now because they think that the situation just now is most favourable for starting a campaign of 'no rent'. There is a widespread famine in Jaipur, and a great discontent prevails among the peasants. Even without anybody doing anything, there may be trouble. But if there was some one to incite them, trouble becomes a certainty. While they think this is a strong point, I think it to be a weak point. I therefore advised Jamnalalji that even if on a certain issue satyagraha had to be started, it should be confined to only few selected persons. But you know the technique of satyagraha better and therefore you have to decide what they have to do. The Jaipur authorities still seem to be eager to carry on negotiations with me. Young¹ phoned me from Jaipur serving notice on Jamnalalji and was practically apologising. It was at his suggestion that I sought an interview from Glancey although I have never met him before. I understand Beauchamp is leaving Jaipur very soon. He would be replaced by Lothian² or some other Englishman. Young thinks the next man would be a better man than Beauchamp. In my opinion Beauchamp is more a fool than a wicked man. I found Glancey also was hopelessly misinformed. Jaipur undoubtedly is a most backward state from the point of view of administration. The public opinion, I have no doubt, is waking up. But it is not well organised and no one has done any constructive work in Jaipur worth the name. Hiralal Shastri is very sincere and brave man, but he is a bit rash and self-opinionated. You will meet all these friends and will give them such advice as you think fit. Jamnalalji asked me to write to you my views and so I have done. One thing more, I feel you might write something about Jaipur in *Harijan*, would you touch the question of my College in case you decide to write about Jaipur? That too is a long standing injustice.

Yours affectionately,
Ghanshyamdas

¹ F.S. Young, Inspector-General of Police, Jaipur State.

² Arthur Cunningham Lothian, b. 1887; education: University of Aberdeen; Christ Church, Oxford. MA; entered ICS in 1910; joined Indian Political Service in 1915; Resident at Jaipur, 1929-31, 1933-34; Political Agent, Eastern Rajputana States, 1933; Prime Minister, Alwar; Special Representative of Viceroy for Federation discussions with Indian States, 1936-37; Resident for Rajputana, 1937-42.



4. Draft¹ of Press Statement for Jamnalal Bajaj

CWMG, Vol. 68, pp. 281–82

Bardoli

7 January 1939

Rumours have been going the round as to what I am going to do about the ban on my entry into Jaipur State—my birthplace and ancestral home. The ban is as much a surprise to me as to my friends. My whole life has been passed in the interests of peace in all walks of life. Whatever else non-violence may be with Congressmen it is my creed and I try as much as it is in my power to live up to it. I am no enemy of States. I have always maintained a friendly attitude towards them. I have always believed the States to be capable of responding to the new awakening that has taken place in India. I am now carrying on correspondence with a view to find out the secret lying behind the ban. The wording of the order in no sense applies to me. I do not wish to act in haste. I have no desire to embarrass the Jaipur State authorities. But if every honourable effort to have the ban removed fails the public may depend upon my doing my duty.

My present and immediate object is to afford through the Mandal² relief to the famine-stricken in Jaipur State. I hope that the ban will not be allowed to disturb the would-be donors. I am making arrangements for all eventualities. Indeed my main reason for going to Jaipur was to devise measures for my famine relief.

My second immediate concern is to try to secure the release of the nine prisoners during the recent crisis in Sikar.³ One of them is convicted and eight are still awaiting trial. I had good grounds for hoping that they would come in for general amnesty. I can only assure them that I shall leave no stone unturned to secure their release while I am still free.

¹ The draft was in Gandhiji's hand.

² Jaipur Rajya Praja Mandal.

³ The cause of the Sikar rebellion was the summary order from the Maharaja to the Rao Raja's son and heir, Hardayal Singh, to leave Mayo College and proceed to England to complete his education. Sikar had been virtually independent of the durbar. Hardayal's banishment provided Rao Raja with an occasion to appeal to Rajputs for the defence of their honour. In April 1938, the Rao Raja collected 30,000 Rajputs, defied the Darbar and British to do their worst. On 24 July 1938, Sikar surrendered and the Maharaja of Jaipur entered Sikar. The people avowed allegiance. All but 10 ring leaders were granted pardon.

5. Gandhi on ban on Jamnalal Bajaj

Harijan, 14 January 1939, *CWMG*, Vol. 68, pp. 289–91

Bardoli

9 January 1939

The ban on Jamnalalji makes curious reading. Here it is:

To
Seth Jamnalal Bajaj
Of Wardha (CP)

Where it has been made to appear to the Jaipur Government that your presence and activities within the Jaipur State are likely to lead to a breach of the peace, it is considered necessary in the public interest and for the maintenance of public tranquility to prohibit your entry within the Jaipur State.

You are, therefore, required not to enter Jaipur territory until further orders.

By order of the Council of State
(Sd.) M. Altaf A. Kherie
Secretary, Council of State,
Jaipur.

He is the last person whose presence anywhere can be a danger. He has even been known as a peacemaker. He has enjoyed the happiest relations with the official world. His worth was so much recognised that he was awarded the title of Rai Bahadur in 1916 or thereabouts. This he returned during the non-co-operation days. He is one of the best known merchants in the commercial world. He is a banker besides being a commercial magnate. Though an ardent Congressmen he has never been known as 'an agitator'. He is foremost in constructive work and social reform. True he has the courage of his convictions and has more than once staked his all for these. He is never afraid of prison. Obviously the description given in the order served upon Jamnalalji is false and wholly inapplicable to him. It will be probably urged that the wording is a mere formality, and that without it the order could not be legally served upon him. If that be so, it proves conclusively that persons like Jamnalalji were never meant by the law to be affected by it. It is an abuse, pure and simple, of the law to keep a person like Jamnalalji out of Jaipur or any other part of the country.

And the humorous part of it all is that Jamnalalji had to be described in the order as 'of Wardha'. As a matter of fact he belongs to the Jaipur State, has property there, and has many relations residing there.

It is to such an order that Jamnalalji has submitted wholly on my advice. There was a rumour that he might be arrested if he attempted to enter Jaipur. He had therefore consulted me as to his duty if an order was served on him. His co-workers of Jaipur had held that he should defy any such order there and then. I held a contrary opinion. And I have no cause to regret my opinion. The order, I reasoned, would be a mad act. Mad people should not be taken at their word. They should be given time to cool down. I understand that great preparations were made in anticipation of the arrest. There must have been a kind of disappointment when the arresting party discovered that they were not to have their prey.

Jamnalalji has lost nothing by waiting and reasoning with the authorities and telling them that they have acted wrongly and hastily. As a responsible man and Jaipur subject, it was perhaps his duty to give them time to reconsider their decision. If they do not, and Jamnalalji decides, as he must, to defy the order, he will do so with added moral strength and prestige. And it is moral strength that counts in non-violent action.

Let it be known that the Maharaja¹ is merely a tool in the hands of his Ministers who are all outsiders and some of them English. They know nothing of the people or the country. They are, as it were, imposed upon them. Jaipur talent is at a discount, though before the foreigners came, Jaipur was somehow or other able to hold its own as a State. I had reason to remark last week on the sorry figure the English Dewan² cut in Rajkot during his very brief term of office. At least the act of the Jaipur Council consisting of outsiders is a sorry exhibition of irresponsibility and ineptitude. The externment of one man, however great, may appear to be insignificant. But events may prove that it was a foolish and costly affair, if not much more. For the reader may not know that there is a Praja Mandal in Jaipur which has been working under Jamnalalji's inspiration for the past six years. Jamnalalji is its present President. The Mandal is a strong organisation containing responsible men as its members and has a good record of constructive work to its credit. The Mandal will have to do its duty if the ban is not removed. For the ban is, it is said, a precursor of stopping even the

constructive and constitutional activities of the Mandal. The authorities cannot brook the growing influence of a body which aims at Responsible Government in Jaipur under the aegis of the Maharaja, no matter by means howsoever honourable. It seems to be the precursor also of a ruthless policy of stopping all activities of bodies having political ambition in any shape or form. And rumour has it that it is a concerted policy on the part of the Rajputana States. Whether it is true only of Jaipur or all the other States, it is sufficiently ominous, and Jamnalalji and the people of Jaipur are in honour bound to resist it with all the strength at their command, no doubt consistently with the Congress creed of non-violence and truth.

¹ Sir Sawai Man Singh Bahadur, Maharaja of Jaipur, b. 1911; accession 7 September 1922; educated at Mayo College, Ajmer and Royal Military Academy, Wodinch; married sister of Maharaja of Jodhpur; administration of Jaipur conducted by Maharaja with the assistance of a Council of ministers.

² Sir Patrick Cadell b. 1871; educated at Edinburgh Academy, Haileybury; Balliol College, Oxford, joined Indian Civil Service; ADC to Viceroy, Chairman, Bombay Port Trust; Acting Member, Executive Council Bombay, 1924; President of the Council, Junagarh State, 1932-35; Sangh State, 1937; Rajkot State, 1938.

6. Jaipur

Harijan, 21 January 1939, *CWMG*, Vol. 68, pp. 299-300

Bardoli

16 January 1939

Jaipur authorities will not be happy until they have brought the Jaipur patriots to their senses. For they have not banned the Jaipur Praja Mandal of which Jamnalalji is the President. Jamnalalji has released for publication his letter¹ to the President of the Jaipur Council of State. The readers will find it elsewhere in these columns. That letter should induce withdrawal of the order. But evidently the Jaipur Council, which I erroneously described as entirely composed of outsiders in my last week's article,² but which I understand does contain four members from the State, is intent upon wiping out of existence every activity whether social, humanitarian or other with which Jamnalalji or his co-workers are connected.

This is the newest method of dealing with people whom the authorities do not like. I can only hope against hope that the Jaipur authorities will shrink from precipitating an all-India crisis. For there are three reasons which might well give the Jaipur question that character. Jamnalalji is himself an institution. He is, moreover, a member of the Working Committee of the Congress and its Treasurer. The method being adopted in Jaipur is too drastic to be suffered without a desperate struggle. If it goes unchallenged, it may mean a death-blow to every activity in the States when it is even remotely connected with the legitimate political aspirations of their people.

The curious thing about Jaipur is that the real ruler is a high-placed Englishman and not the Maharaja. Can it be that he represents the wishes of the central authority? If he does, what becomes of the recent declarations? If he does not, may an English Dewan initiate policies that may in the end spell disaster to the State itself? I understand that the Jaipur treasure-chest is over-full. If the worst happened, it could stand a prolonged boycott by the people, that is, assuming that the modern weapons of destruction do not tame the people into submission. It is time for the Princes and the Central Government to evolve a common policy of action. Or is the Jaipur method the common policy of action, as some tell me it is? I can only hope that it is not.

¹ See above, Draft of Press Statement for Jamnalal Bajaj, 7 January 1939.

² See *CWMG*, Vol. 68, pp. 289-91.

7. Notes of Hiralal Shastri–Young Correspondence

Hiralal Shastri Papers, File No. 4, Pt. II, NMML

22 January 1939

Introduction

'The following are a few letters selected out of a mass correspondence which was carried on between Mr Young and me. I have tried to fill up the gap with brief notes here and there. I hope these selections will give the readers a fair idea of our dealings with the Jaipur Government who were throughout represented by Mr Young formally or informally. One important letter was addressed to H. Beauchamp State. John who, however, did not reply.'

Hiralal Shastri

24 March

'1. Just as Government suspects that public men are out to create difficulties and trouble, so public men suspect that Government is opposed to all progress for the fear that such progress might go against the privileged position of those connected with the administration...

2. (Left out)

3. The authorities seem definitely to suspect that the Mandal is connected with the Congress. *Whatever one's views about the Congress may be, but there is no doubt that Congress is a powerful organisation. I do not think there is any difficulty in the way of the Congress if it decided to enlist members and form Committees in the Jaipur State. Why should the Congress take shelter behind a new thing like the Praja Mandal which can be banned any moment....*

4. (Left out)

5. The dumb mass of people (mainly the villagers) have to be served by somebody, they are helpless and they require sympathy. But there are educated people who know what is going on in British India and elsewhere and who feel that the time has arrived when something should also be done in Jaipur to influence and assist the government in the work of public welfare. *While everywhere the people are fighting for their rights and getting them, it is absurd to think that nothing need be done in this connection in Jaipur.* I know definitely that there is discontent within and I wish that in the interest of all concerned this discontent should not be allowed to increase and that with the help of public men the Government should take necessary steps to meet the requirement of the situation. Public men can assist the Government through an Association of their own or they can be taken along in the machinery of Government in the form of a legislative or advisory body.

6. I am not keen on the organisation of the rural population for the pleasure of it. I have really to see that their needs are being looked after. And in addition to this I feel that the Government must recognise the people. They must be allowed to have an Association of their own—they must have the freedom to have their say the Government should not and need not monopolise public welfare—those who are not in Government service should also have opportunities to serve and should be given a hearing—*the people are of the Government and the Government of the people*—so the people should not be treated as a separate party and rivals who would take the credit themselves and weaken the Government."

7. (Left out)

8. (Left out)

24 July 1939

'1. While there is movement and progress in the rest of India you cannot make the people of the State stand still if anybody makes this unwise attempt it is bound to prove futile.

2. It is quite possible to move slowly and with caution but you cannot ignore the people altogether.

3. Repression may succeed for a while, but if there is spirit within, it must come out sooner or later and too much suffocation is very likely to be followed by an explosion.

4. There are some people who want to do something for the welfare of their fellow brethren; they beg for your sympathy, co-operation and help. No Government worth the name can turn them out with an unreasonable refusal.

5. Government need not take a monopoly for doing any good. Why should government treat the people as separate party? Why should Government be afraid of their own people? Let the people come forward and have their way.

6. In the present circumstances and Government may succeed in silencing some people by some means or the other; but others will remain who are bound to feel bitter and thus there will be a beginning of that something which Government seems anxious to avoid.

7. Broadmindedness and farsighted liberality even as a policy shall be paying in the long run. But if you show smallness and appear panicky you are bound to lose your own prestige on the one hand and goodwill of the people on the other.

8. The word "political" has been used and abused in several ways, Government has immense power to do good and to do wrong as well. Asking the Government to do good may be "political" but it is neither unlawful nor bad.

9. Please do not commit the mistake of comparing forces. Government is apparently powerful but the power of the people, though not so apparent, is irresistible.

10. Please do not create dreadful spectres where there are none. Trust the people so that you may be trusted by them.'

8. On developments in Jaipur: Linlithgow to Zetland, 23 January 1939

Zetland Papers, Acc. No. 1971, NAI

23 January 1939

... As I close this letter, I am a little anxious about developments in Jaipur in connection with the exclusion of Jamnalal Bajaj from that State, and the proclamation of the Praja Mandal, under the orders of the Jaipur Durbar. Bajaj now threatens to make his entry and let the State do their worst, and the Mahatma has also been fulminating on the subject. So far as I am aware the Durbar did not consult us before they took their decision, but it would, I think, be very difficult for us to bring pressure upon them now that they have taken it, to go back on it, for that would be another substantial victory for Congress. My own inclination, as to which I am consulting Glancy by telegram, is therefore to suggest to them that if they maintain the position (and I would not suggest that we urge them to modify it), they would do well, without delay, to publish a statement of their general intentions as regards reforms, concessions, etc., accompanied, if they so wish, by a clear indication that they do not propose, in taking their decisions in these matters, to do so under the dictation of any outside authority or party or on any basis other than the best interests of the State and its subjects. I do not think it is enough merely to say that they will exclude Bajaj, and that everything is going well in Jaipur; and I suspect that something rather more constructive and forthcoming is what is needed. We contemplate, as I think I mentioned to you, posting Todd' there

as Dewan to succeed St. John at the beginning of April. The thought has crossed my mind that, as the Mahatma is clearly at this moment concentrating on the objections to European Dewan, we might do better to have a really reliable and active Indian as Dewan, who could take a strong line without exposing himself to the same type of criticism as a Europeans. The type of man I have in mind is one Raja Gyan Nath,² at present in Nabha. But I must be guided by Glancy's judgment in this, and though I have put the suggestion for his consideration I have not weighted it in any way.

¹ Herbert John Todd, b. 1893; Indian Political Service; Assistant Political Agent, Sibi, 1921; Kalat, 1922; Political Agent, East Rajputana States, 1935; Prime Minister and Vice-President, Council of State, Jaipur 1939.

² Raja Gyan Nath, b. 1885; educated at Foreman Christian College, Lahore; selected for admission to the Foreign and Political Department of the Government of India; Secretary to the Agent to the Governor General, Punjab States, 1928-32; President, Council of Regency, Nabha State, Punjab, 1932-39; Prime Minister, Jaipur State, 1939-42.

9. Genesis of the Troubles in Jaipur

'Real Cause of Trouble in Jaipur', by a Special Correspondent, *Hindustan Times*, 25 January 1939

24 January 1939

The issue raised by the recent acts of the Jaipur Government is of paramount importance to the people of the States all over India. It is a simple one—whether the people of a State have the right to form a public association and make collective representation to the administration. It is this right which is sought to be suppressed by the present policy of Sir Beauchamp St. John. In the case of the Jaipur Raja Praja Mandal, what has happened is clearly a case of breach of faith by the State authorities which is as strange as it is sad. A study of the history, constitution and working of the Praja Mandal, together with the correspondence which the Mandal has had with the authorities, shows how grievously the present Prime Minister has erred and how he has made himself solely responsible for the present crisis in Jaipur.

Object of Mandal

It was in 1931 that the Praja Mandal was first started in Jaipur with open official encouragement. In a letter to the Inspector-General of Police the then President of the Mandal wrote in March 1937: 'From a perusal of the article printed on pages 5 and 6 of the *Sudharak*, you will see how the Praja Mandal came into being in 1931 and how this institution started its work. In this connection, I may also mention that on reference to old papers I find that the authorities were kept in touch with the activities of this Mandal, and I understand that you took keen interest in the formation of this useful organisation of the people of Jaipur. The object and the programme of this Mandal are clearly stated in the revised constitution. And my letter of January 23, 1937, makes it quite clear that we mean to work in close co-operation with State officials. Need I repeat that in these days of progress neither the Government nor the people of Jaipur can afford to do without an institution like the Praja Mandal. I am perfectly sure that you and all reasonable people will agree that it is very necessary and, indeed, very good for the Government to establish living contact with the people and that the Praja Mandal can supply the best means towards this end.'

Offer of Co-operation

This was the spirit in which the Mandal was started and has been working all these seven years—a spirit of cooperation and friendless with the administration. It was only when Sir Beauchamp appeared on the scene and enunciated his strange political doctrines that there was a change in

the Government's attitude, but of that later. This is how in another letter to the Inspector-General of Police, in 1937, the Secretary of the Mandal, Mr Hiralal Shastri, described the policy of the Mandal: 'We mean to work in co-operation for the good of the people of Jaipur. I cannot conclude without making it clear that, for our part, we shall always value your as well as other officials' cooperation and help which I trust will be freely extended to us'. He also added that they had 'all along been trying to meet your (their) wishes', and stated clearly. 'If you wish that the movement should be slow, I would certainly like to meet your wishes as far as possible'. In brief what they wanted was to create through the Mandal a living organisation of the people of Jaipur in constant touch with public sentiment and opinion on the one hand and Government policy and view-point on the other.

Official Tribute

No offer of cooperation from a public association could have been more complete or more sincere. The Mandal kept itself in constant correspondence with the Inspector-General of Police, utilised every opportunity to meet him and discuss questions with him personally, and tried its best to conduct its affairs in such a manner as to give no room for suspicion or hostility from officials. This was evident last year at the time of annual meeting of the Mandal. In deference to the wishes of the Council of Ministers, the Mandal undertook not to take the President's procession along the city route—though there was no reason for the restriction—accepted the three conditions laid down by the Inspector-General for the conduct of the session, and throughout showed itself ready in every way to work in cooperation with the authorities. This was acknowledged by the Inspector-General of Police himself in his letter after the procession, in which he said: 'I congratulate you on the carrying out of your procession in such a peaceful and calm atmosphere'. Again, in another letter in May last after the Conference, the Inspector-General wrote: 'I find myself, like yourself, much relieved that your session has passed off so successfully and that the termination has been one which must bring you a great deal of pleasure as the burden of the arrangements fell on you. I am looking forward to seeing you in a day or two, as you suggest. I must also thank you for your kind remarks about your assistance'. This was the happy spirit of understanding the cooperation in which the Mandal and the Inspector-General were working throughout these years—until Sir Beauchamp came with his heavy heel to crush the Mandal.

The desire for cooperation by the Mandal was so earnest that when the Inspector-General asked the Mandal in July 1937 not to enlist members in the village it agreed even to this and passed the following resolutions unanimously: 'Although in the opinion of this committee enlistment of members either in the towns or villages is the primary concern of any Association, this committee is quite prepared for the satisfaction of the authorities to temporarily restrict the enlistment of members to the city and to certain specified places, as suggested by Mr Young, provided that the Mandal is left free to work in the villages for the social and economic uplift of the people and also to study their need and, whenever necessary, to bring the same to the notice of the authorities concerned'. These assurances were so ample that the Inspector-General even issued a circular to all Police officers in the State asking them not to interfere with the legitimate activities of the Mandal in the districts.

Glaring Contrast

I shall quote only two more letters to show the moderation and desire for co-operation which has always been actuating the Mandal. Only in October last year, the Secretary of the Mandal wrote to the Inspector-General of Police:

'We have pulled on well for about two years, and the credit goes to your patience and farsightedness. For my part, I can only say that I have tried my utmost to be reasonable. The position as between the Government and the Mandal in Jaipur is unique—and whatever our critics may say with regard to Government inaction in connection with the continued growth of a political association on the one hand and with regard to the Praja Mandal's moderation and slow speed on the other—Jaipur's name will go down in history, for the world will see, in due course of time, that there were officials and public workers in Jaipur who achieved the same object with mutual agreement, which elsewhere was almost invariably achieved after agony and heart-burning on both sides. What we should all value is peace and tranquility, progress and reform in Jaipur. We have always been prepared to reform in Jaipur. We have always been prepared to agree to the method of consultation and persuasion'.

These were the hopes which the Mandal had even so late as October last, but the tragedy was the Prime Minister, Sir Beauchamp, lacked the patience and farsightedness which the Inspector-General had been showing, and he precipitated a crisis by going back deliberately on all the good work done during the last seven years and suddenly coming forward with an order to ban Seth Jamnalal Bajaj and declare the Mandal as unlawful body. What a glaring contrast the Prime Minister's attitude presents to that of his own Inspector-General may be seen from the Inspector-General's letter of January 1938, in which he had definitely said:

'I think you are unnecessarily despondent about the future of the Praja Mandal. I am quite sure that other officers like Col. Huban and Col. Cole' share my views as to its utility if you continue along the lines you are at present following and hence we all think that the cooperation of the Mandal with the State will be of advantage to both. Anyone who wishes to carry out reforms is bound to experience many disappointments and setbacks. This has happened all through the history of the world, and you should not be disappointed or disheartened'.

Prime Minister's Move

But did the Prime Minister want the cooperation of the Mandal? From the beginning he has refused to recognise it and avoided meeting, or even corresponding with the officials of the Mandal. His attitude is clearly revealed in the two letters which his office addressed to the Mandal. In February 1937 the Mandal wrote to the Vice-President of the State Council officially drawing his attention to the loss of life and property caused by tigers in the vicinity of Jaipur and 'respectfully' suggesting 'that a comprehensive enquiry may be made so that it may be possible for the Raj to take necessary steps'. It was a curt note to say that 'the Jaipur Government is unable to recognise any association as representative of the entire body of Jaipur subjects, and while they are ready to redress individual grievances, they cannot entertain representations from any collective body'. The Mandal had as a matter of fact never claimed that it represented the entire body of Jaipur subjects. All that it did was to point out that about a hundred persons were being killed by tigers every year and something should be done to save the poor people. Another attempt was made to get a hearing from the Prime Minister by sending to him and other Ministers a copy of the Working Committee's resolutions, all of them being merely constructive suggestions, but the only response from the Prime Minister's office was another curt note reminding the Mandal of his previous letter. The Prime Minister's peculiar mentality may be understood from the following note which, on his behalf, was handed over to the Mandal's Secretary on July 24, 1937. It said: 'While the State would no doubt be ready to recognise the Mandal if it confined itself to village uplift and work of a purely social nature, it cannot accept the right of the Mandal or any other body to represent the people in the presentation of their grievances. The same reforms which are being urged by the Mandal are under consideration of the State and if initiated or granted by the State, the Mandal is

bound to appropriate to itself the credit of having forced the State to introduce them. The actual authority which the Mandal would undoubtedly criticize they are themselves anxious to appropriate. The time is not come for this yet in Indian States. Until it is definitely established that the authorities are not ready to cooperate in village uplift or other social work amongst the villages and in collecting subscriptions to maintain an organisation which cannot be of any direct benefit to the villagers themselves'. It is this unfortunate mentality, anti-democratic and perverse in every way, which is responsible for the present trouble in Jaipur.

¹ Col. Edward Hearle Cole, b. 1863; entered Army, 1883; Captain ISC, 1894; Major, Indian Army, 1901; served in NWF Province 1897-98; China, 1900; European War 1914-18; served in Punjab.

10. On Development in Jaipur: Zetland to Linlithgow, 28 January 1939

Zetland Papers, Letters from Lord Zetland to Lord Linlithgow (printed with contents list), 1939, Acc. No. 1969, NAI

28 January 1939

You will I hope pardon me if I address you at this moment. When you kindly allowed me to come and see you on 16 December last you gave me leave to inform you of matters coming to me from India of possible importance.

I have this morning a note from Mr Gandhi dated January 16th replying to a letter of mine. His last paragraph says: 'I have good reasons for the belief that, however desirable it may be, collective contact is not a present possibility. Neither the Secretary of State nor the Viceroy seem to desire it.' I should like to be able to say him, based upon what is understood you to be feeling when I ventured to put this matter before you in December, that this impression is incorrect.

The importance of this lies in the immediate situation. Mr Jamnalal Bajaj was banned entry into the Jaipur State on the day on which I saw you. He obeyed the order for the time being, on Mr Gandhi's advice. He is however a prominent native of Jaipur with property there, and he has, according to the Indian papers just to hand, decide to enter the State on February 1st. He will no doubt be forthwith arrested. I can speak to his being one of the most peaceable members of the Congress Party, knowing him personally and having stayed in his house. But this is not the point. The Congress Party, of which Mr Bajaj is a leading member as you will know, is taking this ban up as a distinct challenge and as bringing to a point the struggle of the States peoples for the right to agitate peaceably for constitutional government in their States; with the direct bearing of this on the federal question. This in itself has a serious aspect since apparently the Congress Party means to make this case an all-India matter.

But I am informed that on the one hand the members of the organisation of which Mr Bajaj is President, forbidden any other means, will engage in some kind of satyagraha; and that on the other, the Prime Minister of Jaipur, Sir Beauchamp St. John, is reported to have said to a representative of Mr Bajaj that it was his considered opinion that non-violence however strict, must be met by violence, and that "his reply to non-violent movement in Jaipur would be the machine-gun". I do not know the views of the Resident.¹

Seeing the temper of both sides it looks therefore as if there may very shortly be bloodshed in Jaipur. This, like the killing of Major Bazalgette,² will put further violence inflame things.

Considering the intense bitterness on both sides I again plead that the time has come for some collective conversation between the Central Authorities and the Party leaders and Provincial Premiers of the Congress Party. Otherwise situation looks like drifting behind Gandhi's powers of

restraint; and, that "major crisis" will arise which he foresaw in December. That would mean but further repression and further hatred, rendering any reasonable solution will-nigh impossible.

¹ Sir Conrad Lawrence Corfield, educated at St. Catherine's College, Cambridge; joined ICS, 1920; Assistant Private Secretary to Viceroy, 1921-22; joined Political Department, 1925; served in Kathiawar, Bahichistan, Rajputana, Central India and Hyderabad; Resident of Jaipur 1938-40; officiating Resident of Rajputana May-October 1939; Resident for Punjab States 1940-45.

² Major R.L. Bazalgette, Political agent, Orissa State was killed by a mob in Ranpur State in Orissa on 5 January 1939. The mob had retaliated after two persons had been killed in the firing ordered by Major Bazalgette.

11. For Liberation of Ruler and Ruled

Bombay Chronicle, 30 January 1939

Bombay
30 January 1939

'The fight of the State subjects, whether it be in Jaipur or elsewhere, will be intended not only for liberating themselves but also their rulers, who are but slaves of British Imperialism. While the people in Indian States continue as slaves under their rulers, the Maharaja themselves are but slaves under highly paid British officials, who are appointed as Residents. The issue which we are called upon to face today is not merely of Jaipur or Rajkot. It is a All-India issue because British India and Indian State go to form one unit.'

This what Seth Jamnalal Bajaj declared in the course of a speech at the Cotton Exchange this evening, when a send-off was given to him on behalf of the All India States People's Conference, BPCC, and several commercial organisations of Bombay.

Among those present were Mr Mungalal Abenka, Mr Umashankar Dixit,¹ Mr Keshavdev Nivetia, Mr Virchand Panachand Shah,² Mr Hiralal Dave and Mr Gulabrai Nemani.

The function which was held on the terrace of the Cotton Exchange building was attended by thousands of citizens, who owing to lack of space had to stand in the streets below and listen to the speeches relayed through the microphone. Seth Jamnalal was profusely garlanded on behalf of over a hundred organisations.

In the course of his introductory remarks, Mr S.A. Brelvi³ said that Seth Jamnalal Bajaj was a great Satyagrahi to whom the courting of jail in the name of the Motherland was not a new experience. It was a matter of good fortune for the State subjects that they had been able to secure the leadership of an all-India figure, who had taken part in three Satyagraha movements in the past.

The Jaipur State authorities, continued Mr Brelvi, had been given sufficient time to reconsider their decision with regard to the ban on the entry of Seth Jamnalal into the State. The Resident and the British Government had not thought fit to lift the ban. It now depended on them either to save the situation or precipitate a crisis. Mr Brelvi characterised the awakening of State subjects today as the dawn of a new era.

Mr Samaldas Gandhi⁴ said that there were several dark spots on the map of India. It was the desire of the Congress to remove them. If Seth Jamnalal Bajaj were to be clapped in prison, there was sure to be a stupendous freedom movement in the States.

Mr Ali Bahadur Khan said that India could not be partitioned into two divisions as British India and Indian States. The Jaipur State authorities would only be paying the way for an all-India movement by precipitating a crisis within their State.

Mr Madanlal Jalen said that Jaipur subjects needed not only the moral support of Bombay and other cities but material help with money and volunteers.

Seth Jamnalal Bajaj rising amidst cheers said that the Britishers who was doing the wire-pulling in States needed to be told that his game would not be tolerated any more. The Maharaja in the States were but puppet dancing to the tune of highly-paid British officials, who came as Residents. It was customary with a ruler brought up in English atmosphere to think that he could not do without a Britisher. That was the reason for an unduly large number of outsiders being imported for posts even when there were qualified Indians to do the job.

Seth Jamnalal wished to point out that he was not an enemy of the Britisher. There was nothing wrong, whenever it was found that no qualified Indians were available. But to import a Britisher as a band-leader as is done in the States was sheer waste of money.

Continuing Seth Jamnalal said that much of the bitterness between State subjects and their rulers would be avoided if only the latter refused to be dictated by highly paid British officials thrust upon them as Residents. It was a matter of pity that the Maharajas did not exercise their independence but allowed themselves to be led by their own subordinates. The fight of the State subjects was therefore, aimed not only at their own liberation but also at the liberation of rulers, who were but slaves of British Imperialism.

Seth Jamnalal further expressed that he had considered the pros and cons before taking the decision to defy the ban. Being a shrewd businessman, it was his habit to undertake only those ventures which led to gain. He was confident that his present decision with regard to Jaipur would yield the most successful results. It was the duty of all Jaipur people who had settled down elsewhere to render help to the Jaipur struggle with money and by sparing the services of volunteers.

¹ Uma Shankar Dikshit b. 1901; educated at Christ Church College, Kanpur, influenced by Gandhi; General Secretary, Kanpur City Congress Committee in 1921; Member, UPSC, 1920-25, imprisoned during Non-Cooperation movement; Treasurer, Bombay PCC, 1930, conducted the Satyagraha movement in Bombay, May-December 1930; Journalist associated with National Herald, Naujwan and Quami Awaz; Director, PTI, 1965-67, Member, CWC and AICC, 1969.

² Virchand Panachand Shah, President, Kathiawar Praja Mandal.

³ Syed Abdullah Brelvi (1891-1949); education: Anjuman High School, Bombay; Elphinstone College, Bombay (BA, MA & LLB); wrote articles for 'Times of India' and 'Bombay Chronicle'; Editor, 'Bombay Chronicle', 1924-29 staunch nationalist, influenced by Gandhi; Member, AIML delegation to All Parties Convention, substitute member CWC 1930 in place of those arrested; arrested in 1930 and 1932; Member, Working Committee, Nationalist Muslim Party; President, Gujarat States People's Conference 1934; Member, Tentative Labour Enquiry 1939; Fearless Critic of the government.

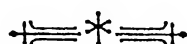
⁴ Samaldas Laxmidas Gandhi (1897-1953), Son of M.K. Gandhi's elder brother; educated at Bhavsinghji High School, Porbandar; Participated in Home Rule League; started writing articles for newspapers; editor, 'Janambhumi'; wrote about struggle of Limbdi and Rajkot; started a Gujarati daily called 'Vande Matram'; played a leading part in Azaadi Hukumat i.e. people's movement and merger of Junagarh State with the Union of India.

12. Ban on Jamnalal Bajaj: Secretary of State to Viceroy (Tel.), 30 January 1939

Linlithgow Collection, Acc. No. 2161, NAI

30 January

I agree that Durbar should be supported in last resort in maintaining ban on Bajaj but I appreciate desirability of discouraging any unduly provocative action against his supporters in the State so long as order is maintained.



13. Gandhi on the Struggle in Jaipur

CWMG, Vol. 68, pp. 350–52*Bardoli*

30 January 1939

The reader should know the distinction between the Jaipur struggle and the Rajkot one.

The Rajkot struggle is frankly for Responsible Government within the State and is now for redeeming the Ruler's promise to his people. Every man and woman of Rajkot, if they have any stuff in them, will be reduced to dust in resisting the dishonourable conduct of the British Resident.

The Jaipur struggle is on a very small and narrow issue. The one political association of Jaipur has been virtually declared illegal for the offence of pleading for Responsible Government, and its President, himself a resident of Jaipur, has been put under a ban. The Civil disobedience struggle will cease the moment the bans are lifted and the right for free association, holding public meetings, etc., is conceded. But here again the British lion has open out his big claws. The British Prime Minister of Jaipur had a chat with Barrister Chudgar,¹ legal adviser of the Rao Rana of Sikar. He reported to Seth Jamnalalji the following purport of the talk:

I understand it my duty to inform you that during my interview with Sir Beauchamp St. John, Prime Minister of Jaipur, in connection with Sikar affairs on the 9th inst. (January), at about 11 a.m. at his bungalow Natanika Bagh, I had some discussion with him regarding the Jaipur situation. The following is the substance of the discussion:

I told Sir Beauchamp that the ban against your entry into Jaipur State territories came as a painful surprise to millions of people all over India, particularly because you are well-known to be a man of peace and your mission was to supervise and direct famine relief activities in the famine-stricken parts of Jaipur State. To this Sir Beauchamp replied that he agreed that you are a man of peace, but you and your men's visit, he thought, would bring you and your men in contact with the masses in the famine-stricken areas, and this he did not like for obvious political reasons. I told him that you cannot be expected to submit to the order for an indefinite period, and that it should be better in the interests of the State and the people, in view of the statement you have published in the Press after you had been served with the order, if the order were recalled so that unnecessary trouble may be avoided. He was adamant, and he said that he was prepared to meet any situation that might arise if you disobeyed the order. He said that the Congressmen are out for a revolution by means of a non-violent struggle. But non-violence, he said, was a force as powerful or perhaps more powerful than violence. He further said Indian were playing upon the humane instincts in the English race, but if there was Japan or Herr Hitler instead of the English in India we could not have succeeded so well with our non-violence.

He then said that it was his considered opinion that non-violence, however strict, must be met by violence, and his reply to the non-violent movement in Jaipur would be the 'machine-gun'. I pointed out to him that all Englishmen were not of his way of thinking and even the English race as such would not agree with him. He said, 'That may or may not be so,' but personally he was of the opinion that there was no difference between non-violence and violence, and that there would be nothing wrong in using violence against non-violence.

If you or Mahatmaji desire to make use of this statement, I have no objection.

I consider this to be so startling that I referred it to the Prime Minister in the following letter (18.1.1939). The Prime Minister replied as follows (20.1.1939):

I write to acknowledge your kind letter of the 18th instant, enclosing a copy of a letter from Mr Ghudgar to Seth Jamnalal Bajaj. Your hesitation in publishing it before you had ascertained the correctness of its contents was a wise step, which I personally much appreciate, as I am now able

to inform you that this description of my views is completely erroneous. I am unable to understand how Mr Chudgar so misunderstood me, as I may say that this incident confirms me in my hesitation to grant any such interviews in future.

Now that you are aware of the facts, I am sure your reluctance to publish such a letter will be confirmed. Should, however, you decide otherwise, I shall be glad if you can inform me as soon as practicable so that I can take suitable action.

With renewed thanks for your consideration. I replied as under (22.1.1939):

To this there came the following reply (25.1.1939):

Many thanks for your letter of the 22nd instant.

I am sure you will sympathize with me in my natural hesitation to make a record of an interview which was understood to be private and personal when the other party to the interview has already threatened to publish an erroneous version. Such a procedure can, as I am sure you will agree, only lead to acrimony, and so far as I can see, serve no useful purpose.

Should, however, Mr Chudgar see fit to publish his erroneous version, I am sure you will give me due warning so that, as I have already said, I may take suitable action.

To this I replied again as follows (27.1.1939):

I referred the correspondence to Shri Chudgar and he has sent me the copy of the following letter he has addressed to Shri Jamnalal (28.1.1939):

I have read the correspondence between Mahatmaji and Sir W. Beauchamp St. John ending with Mahatmaji's letter to you dated the 15th instant again, and I say that what I have stated in that letter is a substantially correct reproduction of the conversation between me and Sir Beauchamp.

The Prime Minister's letter have made strange reading had asked for bread, he has sent me a stone. He will pardon me if I believe Shri Chudgar's version, unless he can give his own. His mere denial accompanied by a threat carries no weight.

The Congress cannot wait and watch whilst it has the power, and allow the people of Jaipur to die of mental and moral starvation, especially when this denial of a natural right is backed by British might. If the Prime Minister has no authority to do what he is doing, let him at least be recalled.

¹ Popat Lal Chudgar; Legal Adviser to Rao Rana of Sikar; Member of deputation of States people sent to England in 1928 to inform British public about true state of affairs in Princely territories, leading worker of AISPC; author of '*Indian Princes and People's Freedom*'

14. On Development in Jaipur: Viceroy to Secretary of State (Tel.), 30 January 1939

Linlithgow Collection, Telegraphic correspondence between Viceroy and Secretary of State,
Vol. IV, 1939, Acc. No. 2161, NAI

30 January 1939

In light of views of Lothian and Corfield I formed view that Jaipur front may be thinner than it looks, and danger to morale of Durbar involved in any strong pressure by me towards compromise greater than might have at first appeared. But outcome of discussion was that (a) Bajaj will be arrested on entry on entry on 1st February, escorted to station on mail line outside State, and there released with polite, but clear indication that his presence in Jaipur is not desired; (b) Durbar will be advised to suspend any announcement of nature proposed in paragraph 1 for the present, so as to avoid any suggestion of coat tailing; (c) it will no doubt be necessary to publish that Bajaj has entered State and has at once been arrested and deported....

I have made it clear that I am anxious if I can do so without prejudicially affecting morale to play for time, but if my endeavours to round this course without trouble are unsuccessful, and Congress insist on forcing the issue, we may have no option but to face up to it. For in such circumstances (a) to fail to do so would, I am advised (and I have not the slightest doubt that the advice is sound) inevitably result in a serious landslide among the States, who would regard our attitude as a clear indication that Congress was concerned not merely to secure a majority in the Federal Centre, but as recently hinted by Gandhi, to assume the functions of the paramount power, and would think early compromise on their own part with Congress the wise course; (b) position in event of an international war were we at the time of its outbreak faced with a general ministerial crisis would be serious indeed; and I am all the more reluctant to contemplate a situation in which we would have to face whatever difficulty may in any event be inevitable with Congress Government on outbreak of a War, with the added complication either that the States were no longer behind us, but looking to, or under the influence of, Congress rather than the paramount power, of that widespread agitation and disorder were extent in the States with the two fold consequence of inhibiting the larger States in their capacity to help us with troops and causing the smaller States to call upon us for troops for the maintenance of order....

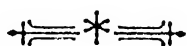
15. Ban on Jamnanlal Bajaj: Viceroy to Secretary of State (Tel.),
31 January 1939

Linlithgow Collection, Private and personal letter No. 72, Acc. No. 2161, NAI

31 January 1939

There have been further discussions with Birla. He states Bajaj is disposed to challenge issue now on ground that he would be in a better fighting position now than in two months' time unless he can get undertaking regarding Praja Mandal, ban on himself and his disputes with Durbar over Sikar prisoners. Birla was told that there was no hope of a bargain of this nature and warned that if there was a break we should have done everything possible to avoid it and should have received no help whatever from Congress; and was advised that he should do, whatever he can with Bajaj. I am suggesting to Durbar that it would probably in view of rift inside Congress over Bose be of advantage as giving me further time if, in event of Bajaj crossing border tomorrow and returning immediately after being deported on first occasion, he could for a second time be deported in the same way, and that I would back them in arresting him and putting him in confinement if he made a third attempt.

I will of course continue to do all in my power to avert a break. But after further discussion with Glancy today and in the light of latest developments, I do not feel any doubt that we must stand firm over this matter of Jaipur, and equally over Rajkot.... I am now convinced that, however, illogical this may seem, effect of successful attack on Jaipur would be to destroy early hope of Federation. I think, too, that Jaipur's collapse might lead to a general route of the States large and small with consequences none of us can measure.... I think it essential therefore, that we should stand firm however reluctant we may be to have to face this issue. It is however, as you will agree, essential equally that if we are to do this, I should be satisfied that I can rely on your full support even if matters mature to the point of letting Ministries go in Provinces....



16. Ban on Jamnalal Bajaj: Viceroy to Secretary of State (Tel.),
1 February 1939

Linlithgow Collection, Telegraphic correspondence between Viceroy and Secretary of State,
Vol. IV, 1939, Private and Personal, Acc. No. 2161, NAI

1 February 1939

I have no doubt that your estimate is correct that if Jaipur were to yield to demand for removal of ban on Bajaj and Praja Mandal, general collapse of State's resistance to dictation from Congress as to their form of government might easily follow with incalculable consequences.

I regard your advice to Jaipur regarding treatment of Bajaj as consistent with our statement of policy towards Congress demands that we must be prepared to face the consequences even if they should involve resignations of Congress Ministries in provinces. As far as I am able to judge the present is as good an issue as we are likely to find if a break has to come with Congress and should make Gandhi think twice about letting in extremists. At the same time I have no doubt that you will take steps to secure that internal action in Jaipur against agitation is reasonably temperate and such as could be definitely against charge of vindictive oppression where no where no breach of the peace has occurred.

17. Reports on the Praja Mandal meetings of 9 February 1939:
Police Report regarding the activities of Praja Mandal, Jaipur
Praja Mandal Papers, File No. 68/6, 1939, NAI

9 February 1939

Sir,

I beg to report that this afternoon at 4.30 p.m. the members of the Jaipur Rajya Praja Mandal assembled at Chopar Manak Chowk according to their programme. The spectators also gathered around them and the mob swelled up very soon. The four boys who have offered themselves for arrest along with Chiranji Lal Misra,¹ the first Director, also came. Their *tika* and *mala* (garland) ceremony was performed and they flew a flag upon which 'Jaipur Rajya Praja Mandal' was written. This flag was carried by two of the aforesaid four boys with the support of two bamboos. They then started with the flag with Chiranji Lal Misra underneath the flag, followed by their so-called Praja Mandal leaders like Hiralal Shastri, Kapoor Chand Patni² Harish Chandra Vakil, Kesar Lal Kataria, Hans D. Rae, Kewal Chand Mehta and Dr Jagan Nath Dentist, etc. Most of the students joined this procession, who had come out of their school and colleges after having finished their working hours. Prominent amongst the students were 1. Tosh Chand, a college student, 2. Sacchidanand (X class), Durbar High School, 3. Nityanand (VIII class), Durbar High School and 4. Son of Amolakh Chand Seth, a college student. The processionists marched with the slogans of 'Praja Mandal Zindabad', 'Mahatma Gandhi Zindabad', 'Jawaharlal Nehru Zindabad', 'Seth Jamnalal Bajaj Zindabad' and 'Hindu-Muslim Ittehad Zindabad' etc. Tosh Chand, a college student cried out at the Ajmer Gate 'Beauchamp Murdabad' (for Sir Beauchamp State. John). The procession passed through Tripoliya Bazar, Kishanpool Bazar, Amber Gate and ultimately reached the Museum through the gate opposite to the Man Prakash Talkies. Azim Bux Kannigar of Mahalla Pannigaran also joined the procession near Isar Lath (Sarga Suil). The mob gradually swelled on so much so that it was a gathering of about 3,500/4,000 at the Museum. Some of the men in the mob were shouting the slogans of 'Maharaja Man Singh Ji ki Jai'.

Opposite to the Museum over the circle on the road these people formed a circle of the processionists and Chiranji Lal Misra moved in an open space along with the 4 Satyagraha volunteers with the flag. He then commenced lecturing moving around.

He said that he was very much grateful for the big assemblage and offered his thanks to the processionists. He then said that there were so many rumours that the public of Jaipur was not at all prepared to join them and that it was a mere waste of time and energy for the Praja Mandal people to make a hue and cry for nothing. How could so many of them follow them if they were not prepared for this? This means they had the whole-hearted support of the whole of the Jaipur public. He preached the audience to join them whenever required as they wholly depend on their full support. He said that the public of Jaipur will get their every day programme of working every morning when the batches of their *Prabhat Pheri* goes round through their respective localities. He further said that if at all required they will send message to the shopkeepers in the night to observe Hartal the following day.

Chiranji Lal Misra and his four volunteers then moved towards the main staircase of the Museum and signaled the assemblage to close down towards him and this was done. He then addressed the audience that he had come with the batch of volunteers to get arrested by violating the law of taking out procession and holding public meetings without the sanction of the authorities for the cause of the Jaipur public but nobody was going to arrest them. He criticized the existing Law saying that they have made the law but still they themselves do not stick to it. He explained that the power of the public union is so strong that nobody could break it even if the whole Ministry and Police force is utilised. He advised the public to be preserving and peaceful and non-violent. He further said that he had received so many letters of congratulations and appreciations from so many State employees for the noble work they are doing and also the same words through the friends and relations of so many other State employees. This shows that even the State employees, although they were State servants, were in their side. He said that these State employees have said that they were really sorry because they could not join them for such a noble act for fear of their services but they had every sympathy for the success of their movement.

He then turned towards gaining the favour of the Muslims and said that in Jaipur both the Hindus and the Muslims were living as brothers since ages and that there can be no power which could divide them. The two or three rumours afloat were all false and baseless (he did not explain the rumours).

He then turned towards the Police and said that they were doing no injustice but they were performing their duties. But they too do not like to perform such sort (sic) of disgraceful act from the bottom of their heart.

He said that he had nothing to say for Beauchamp Sahib (Sir Beauchamp St. John), because he was the only man who opened the doors of their present movement (This was a taunt).

He then pointed out three things on his fingers:

1. Removal of Ban on Jamnalal Bajaj from entering to Jaipur State,
2. Abolition of the Public Societies Act¹ for the welfare of the Community.
3. Abolition of the Public Meeting Act for civil liberally. These were the things for which the Praja Mandal was fighting at the present moment.

Further, he said that they were not demanding Responsible Government just now. This might be given to them after a year or two years or three years when the occasion comes. But they must get it sooner or later. However this was not their immediate demand.

He impressed the audience that this is being done for the common cause of the public of Jaipur and not for a particular body.

He terminated his speech after about half an hour and asked the audience to return to their respective homes peacefully. He thanked the audience again and requested for their support whenever and wherever required. Hiralal Shastri whispered something in the ears of Chiranji Lal Misra and then Chiranji Lal Misra said that he would be more glad to see every one of them while he is in jail.

Most of the students are taking part in these activities which requires timely checking through their parents, wardens or guardians.

Submitted for information.

¹ Chiranji Lal Misra, a leading Praja Mandal worker who got arrested during agitation against ban on Jamnalal Bajaj; Vice-President, Jaipur Praja Mandal

² Kapoor Chand Patni, an active Praja Mandal worker, also arrested for participating in agitation for release of Jamnalal Bajaj.

³ The Public Societies Act of 1939 in Jaipur was a repressive law on advice of the political department, and in reaction to its fears of a Congress assault on federation via Praja Mandal.

18. Jamnalal Bajaj on Jaipur Communique

Hindustan Times, 4 February 1939

3 February 1939

Seth Jamnalal Bajaj, on being shown a press message that the Jaipur State communiqué issued in reply to Gandhiji's statement was regarded as conciliatory, observed: 'I do not think there is anything conciliatory in the communique. There is nothing in it which requires any consideration on our part. Rather it adds insult to injury, and as such the question of consulting Gandhiji does not arise at all. It can in no way affect our determination to fight the ban imposed by the Jaipur Government on the Praja Mandal and on my entry into the State'.

19. Jamnalal Bajaj's Statement

Hindustan Times, 6 February 1939

3 February 1939

Seth Jamnalal Bajaj has issued the following statement immediately before his arrest:

'I am in the land of my birth once again. The affection shown by countrymen throughout his journey and the previous one has been overwhelming and has touched me deeply. They have been so peaceful and orderly that I feel confident that they shall carry on the struggle most peacefully and in a singularly non-violent manner.

The reason for the ban imposed upon me as given by the State authorities was that my presence within the State was likely to result in a breach of the peace. I entered the State territory on February 1 last and addressed big gatherings on various stations during the journey, but it has caused no danger to the peace nor did it result in any disturbance. I have now been again traveling throughout my country overnight and while I have found unbounded enthusiasm among my people their peaceful and orderly conduct has exposed the hollowness of the mischievous insinuation.

My birthright to be in my native land is always unquestionable. It will become the State authorities to raise frivolous and false issues. The issue is a simple one: whether the people have the right and freedom to organise themselves for the service of their fellow-beings and for preparing

themselves for Responsible Government under the aegis of the Maharaja. The State authorities are denying this elementary right of citizenship. The people are determined to have it. Let there be a straight fight when the people on this issue and let there be a fair trial between brute force of the State and the spirit of sacrifice of a people determined to live as free and self-respecting citizens.

In this struggle there is no doubt that the righteousness of the cause of the people shall succeed. I must, however, give a warning to the State authorities. I am having reports of attempts by state servants for arranging organised goondaism to provoke the people and create disturbances. If they succeed in their nefarious object the entire responsibility shall be theirs.

My appeal to the people is that they must remain peaceful and non-violent under the gravest provocation. Their cause is just and noble and victory shall be theirs at no distant date'.

20. Satyagrahis' processions

Hiralal Shastri Papers, File No. 4, Part-II, NMML

Jaipur

9 February 1939

As announced in the programme distributed last night, *Prabhat Pheris* were taken out today from the Praja Mandal office and the house of Sjt Hiralal Shastri. The public joined in hundreds and thousands while the *Prabhat Pheris* were passing through the main by the lanes of the city. The two *phers* assembled at Manik Chowk Choupar and some of the Praja Mandal leaders gave brief but vigorous speeches in which the unassailable strength of non-violence and Satyagraha was let known to the public. The people started from there a procession which stopped at Rubber Kti Tunti, where a mass meeting was held. In spite of the morning cold and very short notice the meeting was attended by more than 5,000 people. Sjt Hiralalji Shastri in his animated speech severely condemned the puerile policy of the State authorities and criticised the recent barbarous treatment accorded by them to Seth Jamnalal Bajaj.

II .

In accordance with the programme announced at the morning meeting today exactly at 4.30 p.m. the Satyagraha procession led by Sjt Chiranjilal Misra, Dalpati and the four volunteers who were profusely garlanded by ladies started by Manak Chowks Chopad and the people numbering over 15,000 cheered the Satyagrahis with national slogans. The procession after passing through the Tripoliya Bazar and the Ajmeri Gate terminated at the Museum in Ramniwas garden where the Dalpati Sjt Misra delivered an inspiring speech. 'Our struggle is not with any individual, but it is between the corrupt and incompetent administration and its awakened people', declared the Dalpati who proceeded, 'The Jaipur Government has denied us our liberty and snatched from us what was ours by birth is right. We are determined to regain our freedom—freedom of press, of speech, writing, assembly and taking out procession and we will not hesitate to sacrifice our utmost for this noble cause. The public of Jaipur deserves to be congratulated on the unity among the Hindus and Muslims and I feel confident that every Jaipurian, irrespective of caste, race or religion, will join us in this struggle for existence, because without freedom existence is nothing less than death. Though the attainment of Responsible Government is the ultimate object of the Praja Mandal, our present fight is for the fundamental rights of existence, viz., recognition of Praja Mandal and grant of civil liberties, non-violence is invincible....' Concluding, Sjt Misra asked the audience to be non-violent, join the Satyagraha and to get ready to sacrifice every thing where the occasion arises. The meeting dispersed amidst loud shouts of national slogans.

21. Righteousness is Victorious:

Police Reports regarding activities of Praja Mandal

Praja Mandal, Jaipur, File No. 68, 1939, NMML

10 February 1939

Those who joined the processions and meetings of the morning and the evening must have noticed for themselves that the whole of Jaipur is with the Praja Mandal, and those who could not present themselves at them for any reason must be repenting. The following resolution was unanimously passed in the morning meeting.

This mass meeting of the residents of Jaipur condemns the recent ungentlemanly and timid behaviour of the State employees towards S. Seth Jamnalalji and wants to let the Government know clearly that these actions of them go to prove that they are not fit to carry the administration of the State. This meeting appeals to the public of Jaipur that they should quietly forbear the atrocities and humiliation and come forward with an open heart to help the Praja Mandal in the Satyagraha fight.

22. What is the fault of Praja Mandal: Police Reports
regarding activities of Praja Mandal

Praja Mandal, Jaipur, File No. 68, 1939, NMML

11 February 1939

In the eyes of the Raj perhaps the greatest fault of the Praja Mandal is that it does not see eye to eye with the Raj and recklessly comes out with the plain truth. Those who have come from outside and are occupying high chairs with fat salaries wish that there should be no decrease in their rule, but the Praja Mandal loudly cries to the Raj to hear the miseries of its subjects. The troubles of the people these days are known to everybody, but there are few who are fond of only saying 'Ji Huzoor' (Yes Sir), and 'Jo Hukam' (Very well sir), and they go to the high officers of the Raj and tell them that the subjects are quite happy and alright. These are also some people who show loyalty to the Raj for the temptation of some money.

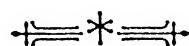
What you should do?

Praja Mandal has girt up for the benefit for the benefit of the people. If you have to undergo some hardships for the good of the people you should do that. When the Raj did not listen to the cries of the subjects the Praja Mandal has started Satyagraha. Praja Mandal will certainly be victorious in Satyagraha, for Praja Mandal is supported by Truth and Justice. But you also should help Praja Mandal in every way. The Jaipur Hindu and Muslim brethren should unanimously declare that we are all one, and we all combined (in our) wish to rectify our difficulties. What you have got to do tomorrow will be made known to you from time to time, and the moment you get the notice you should comply with it at once.

Jaipur Day

Tomorrow on Sunday the 12th February 1939, the Jaipur Day will be observed, and a special programme for tomorrow is under preparation. You should wait for the programme which on receipt must be acted upon.

Hiralal Shastri



23. Kisans Support Praja Mandal's Demands

Hindustan Times, 20 February 1939

Agra
18 February 1939

The following letters have been exchanged between Seth Jamnalal Bajaj and the Vice-President of the Kisan Jat Panchayat, Shekhawati. They elucidate the position of the Jat Kisans with regard to the present satyagraha movement in Jaipur State:

Shreeman President Saheb, Jaipur Praja Mandal—You are aware of the fact that Kisan Jat Panchayat, Shekhawati, has been working to ameliorate the pitiable lot of the cultivators for a long time. The aims and objects of Shekhawati Kisan Jat Panchayat are to get just settlement of land; to lower down the incessantly increasing revenue on land and to get just and reasonable rent determined; to get all lagbaghs abolished forever; to acquire full proprietary rights on land, while protecting the hereditary rights on it, and to endeavour to secure political rights.

But the immediate demands, for which Kisan Jat Panchayat is struggling peacefully and constitutionally, are the following:

- (1) All lagbaghs, besides land revenue, which are exacted from cultivators, must be abolished at once forever.
- (2) Due to famine this year full remission in rent must be given in areas of total failure of crops, and in other places a reasonable rent should be charged by legal means proportionately to the nature of produce.

In this connection, we would like to make this fact clear that our present struggle is not a no-tax campaign.

We have read your manifesto which you issued at the time of your arrest. Demands for the elementary rights of citizenship, freedom of speech and writing, liberty to hold public meetings and take our processions are regarded by Shekhawati Kisan Jat Panchayat as the birthrights of the subjects of Jaipur and we fully agree with Jaipur Praja Mandal in their attainment.

We think it expedient that you will kindly clear the attitude of Jaipur Rajya Praja Mandal towards the immediate demands of Kisan Jat Panchayat and its present struggle for their attainment.

Hira Lal Singh
Vice-President
Seth Jamnalal's Reply

Dear Sir,

Received your letter dated February 4, 1939, in which you have asked the attitude of Jaipur Rajya Praja Mandal towards the immediate demands of Shekhawati Kisan Jat Panchayat and its struggle carried on for their attainment. It is needless to mention that Jaipur Rajya Praja Mandal is an association of all the subjects of Jaipur State and, as cultivators form a majority in the State, it automatically becomes, to a great extent, an association serving the interests of the cultivators. It is undebatable that in Jaipur State, as also in other States, the lot of cultivators is pitiable and its improvement is greatly needed. The aims of the Panchayat, which you have mentioned, are beneficial to the cultivators, but, in my opinion, political rights of the cultivators and of other citizens may be the same.

So far as the immediate demands of Shekhawati Kisan Jat Panchayat are concerned, Praja Mandal has full sympathy for them. Unjust lagbaghs must be abolished and rent should not be levied disproportionately to the nature of produce.

I know that your struggle is not a no-tax campaign. It is good that you have made it all the more clear in your letter. Thanks for the approval expressed by you towards the Struggle launched by Praja Mandal for attaining the civil liberty. I am confident that my brother cultivators will take full part in this fight.

Jamnallal Bajaj
President
Jaipur Rajya Praja Mandal

24. Jaipur Satyagraha

Home Department (Special), File No. 917 (1), 1939, NAI

6 March 1939

The Jaipur Rajya Praja Mandal, Bombay, organised a procession of about 100 persons from its office at Kalbadevi Road on March 1st, to observe 'Jaipur Kisan Day'. The procession, which was led by Madanlal Jalan, went to Chowpatty where a public meeting was held under the presidentship of Rajmal Lalvani, MLA. About 500 persons attended.

The president, Madanlal Jalan, All Bahadur Khan, Nagindas T. Master¹ and Professor Indra Vidyavachaspati² of Delhi made speeches in support of a resolution criticizing the Jaipur State authorities for practicing repression on the Kisans of Jaipur, and exhorting the audience to support their struggle which, they said, was an integral part of the struggle for freedom in British India.

A Hindi leaflet giving details of the alleged atrocities committed in Jaipur was distributed at the meeting.

¹ Nagindas T. Master, Vice President of BPCC and Member, Legislative Assembly.

² Indra Vidyavachaspati (1889–1960); sent to Gurukul in Gujranwala and educated through Sanskrit medium; started as teacher in Gurukul Kangri; joined Congress in 1921; later came close to Arya Samaj and Hindu Mahasabha, denounced Gandhi for appeasement of the Muslims; remained in Congress, but in Socialist group; by 1941 identified with Hindu Mahasabha; opposed Partition of India; editor of *Vijaya*.

25. Constitution of the Jaipur Rajya Praja Mandal

Jaipur Praja Mandal Papers, File No. 78, 1939, NMML

1. Name

This Society shall be called the Jaipur Rajya Praja Mandal.

2. Object and Activities

The object of this society is the attainment of Responsible Government in the Jaipur State under the aegis (Chhatra Chhaya) of HH the Maharaja by truthful and peaceful means and in furtherance thereof the society shall endeavour (1) to educate popular opinion (2) to ventilate the people's needs and requirements (3) to ameliorate their moral, social and economic condition and (4) to represent their moral, social and economic condition and (4) to represent their aspirations and grievances to His Highness' government in a constitutional manner.

3. Head Office

The Head Office of the Society shall be ordinarily be located in Jaipur City.

4. Membership

Any subject of Jaipur or any person domiciled in the state who is not less than 18 years of age shall be eligible for the membership of this society on duly submitting an application in the prescribed form together with the annual membership fee of two annas.

5. Organisation

This society shall comprise the following:

- (1) District, Tehsil, Local and Pravasee Committee.
- (2) Working Committee.
- (3) General Committee.
- (4) Annual Session.

6. Change in Constitution

No change in this constitution shall be considered valid until and unless the same is approved by the open session of this society.

7. Rules and Regulations

The General Committee of this society shall be competent to frame necessary rules and regulations, not inconsistent with this constitution for the proper working of the society.

26. Jaipur Satyagraha Suspended

Times of India, 20 March 1939

New Delhi
19 March 1939

On the advice of Mr Gandhi the Jaipur Satyagraha has been suspended.

Announcing the decision to suspend the Satyagraha, Mr Radhakrishna Bajaj, the convener of the Jaipur Satyagraha Council, states that Mr Gandhi has sent the following message to the Council:

‘It is my advice that until I give another decision, the sending of Satyagraha *jathas* into Jaipur State be suspended.’

In a statement to the Press, Mr Bajaj adds: ‘All centers of Satyagraha in Jaipur are hereby notified that until further notice every kind of civil disobedience should be suspended.’

Sixty-eight Satyagrahis were arrested in Jaipur today. Of these, 27 were almost immediately released. The first *jatha* consisted of Mr Chandra Gupta Agarwal and his family. The second was led by Mr Madan Mohan and was followed by three *jathas* of kisans.

Today’s arrests bring the total to 248, of whom 23 are women.

27. Gandhi’s discussions with Jaipur Satyagrahis

Harijan, 3 June 1939, *CWMG*, Vol. 69, pp. 75–76

20 March 1939

Provoking lathi charges or receiving lathi blows on your body in a spirit of bravado is not Satyagraha. True Satyagraha consists in the readiness to face blows if they come in the course of performing one’s duty.

Today the whole atmosphere in the country is reeking of violence as was evidenced at Tripuri. Under violence I include corruption, falsehood, hypocrisy, deceit and the like. If our Satyagraha is to survive this atmosphere, we ahimsaites shall have to be more strict with ourselves. Let only

the purest and the most innocent got to jail. It does not matter if they have to remain immured behind the prison bars for a whole lifetime. Their sacrifice will fill the prison with a sweet fragrance and its influence will even travel outside and subtly transform the entire atmosphere. They will never long for their release nor doubt that their sacrifice is being 'wasted'. They will realize that a consecrated resolve is more potent in its action than mere physical action can ever be. The discipline that they will be acquiring in prison will help the non-violent organisation of the people outside and instill fearlessness among them.

So much for those who are in prison, what about those outside? They must engage in constructive work as the embodiment of the active principle of ahimsa. If it does not appeal to them, it will only betray their lack of faith in ahimsa.

The other thing is internal. They must cultivate a living faith in God—an attitude of utter reliance on Him to the exclusion of all external aids. A single satyagrahi imbued with such faith will inspire the whole people by his example and may induce a heart change even in the opponent who, freed from fear, will the more readily appreciate his simple faith and respect it.

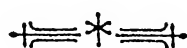
28. What does the Jaipur Praja Mandal Want?

Substance of a Hindi leaflet issued by the Praja Mandal

Hiralal Shastri Papers, File No. 4, part 2, NMML

1. Good relations to continue between the Government and the people and between the various communities; peace and happiness to prevail for the entire people.
2. Government to be responsive to the needs of the people, to understand public sentiment and to give due consideration to public opinion with regard to legislation, expenditure, etc.
3. People to be free to associate, to speak and to write within the law and nobody to be punished except according to law.
4. No able bodied person to remain without work, and no working person to remain without food and clothes.
5. Causes of the increasing indebtedness and deteriorating condition of the poor to be investigated into and some scheme to be devised for their removal.
6. No boys and no girls in the city, in the towns and even in the villages to remain without ordinary education.
7. No person—not even the poorest—to die for want of proper medical assistance.
8. People to get justice without unnecessary inconvenience and without having to resort to unfair means.
9. New scheme to be undertaken for the progress of Agriculture, Industries and Trade, and home crafts to be saved from ruin.
10. To be grateful to the Government for all that is being done in these matters and to put up further needs within the law and the constitution and thus help Government in the difficult task of administration.

Of the above ten points which is objectionable and which is unnecessary?

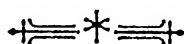


29. Gandhi on Jaipur Civil Disobedience

Harijan, 1 April 1939, *CWMG*, Vol. 69, pp. 85–86*New Delhi*
27 March 1939

The cry comes from Jaipur that some civil resisters are disappointed over the suspension and are not as enthusiastic to tackle the constructive programme, which is chiefly the spinning-wheel and khadi, as they were for fight. If this is the general feeling, the suspension is doubly justified. For the reluctance betrays lack of appreciation of ahimsa without which resistance becomes a species of violence. Those who lightly talk of freedom in the States and hope to attain it through civil resistance, evidently do not know what they are talking about. Will they not learn the lesson of the Provinces? Provincial Autonomy, such as it is, has been won by civil resistance however inferior it may have been. But do they not realise that it is likely to break down if Congress Ministers cannot carry on without the aid of the Police and the Military, i.e. without British guns? If the partial autonomy was won by non-violent means, it must be held also by such means and no other. From recent experiences it seems clear that the country is not ready to hold power through non-violent means. Though for the past twenty years—the period of the greatest mass awakening—the people have been taught to abjure the use of arms including brick-bats and the lathi, and to rely upon non-violence pure and simple, we know that Congress Ministers have been obliged to resort to violence to suppress popular violence real or imaginary. It is clear also that the country cannot be made ready for the use of violence without training. Was our non-violence that of the weak? Hindu-Muslim tension is to me the acid test. The Congress corruption is a sure sign of violence. Swaraj within the States is not to be obtained by any non-violent trick. It will be won, if it is to be won, by non-violence of the strong, i.e., by hard work, patient and mute suffering, service of the poor, the hungry and the forsaken of society, and a voluntary obedience to the laws of the State and society in so far as they are not repugnant to public and private morals. Unless non-violence of the strong is really developed among us, there should be no thought of civil disobedience for swaraj, whether with the States or in British India. And as an indispensable test—by no means infallible—of non-violence I adhere to habitual spinning and habitual use of khadi by the would-be civil resister. The Jaipur Satyagraha, if they desire to take part in any civil disobedience struggle that may take place in future, should understand the implications of non-violence and apply themselves with zest to the fulfillment of the minimum conditions I have prescribed. Let them also know that what applies to them applies to all future satyagrahis that I may have to deal with.

This, however, does not mean that the fight for Swaraj stops. It only means that civil disobedience is not to be so cheap as I fear I have, indirectly if not directly, made it. But I am never too old to learn. One is ever young in the felt presence of the God of Truth or Truth which is God. But if civil disobedience is henceforth to be a very dear commodity, I hope, God willing, to show that it will prove to be infinitely more effective and faster moving than the alloy with which we have so far contented ourselves.



30. Hope of New Era in Jaipur

Bombay Chronicle, 14 September 1939

Jaipur
12 September 1939

Seth Jamnalal Bajaj, member Congress Working Committee and President, Jaipur Rajya Praja Mandal in the course of a statement says:

‘On my release I issued a statement in which I had expressed the hope that the State would revise its policy and withdraw the repressive laws and thereby pave the way for peace and harmony I am today glad to announce that I have not been mistaken in my hopes.

During my absence from Jaipur, the public meetings and processions regulation was repeated and when I came back, I was glad to find that an interview had been arranged with the Maharaja Sahib to explore further possibilities to negotiate our demand for civil liberty a part of which had already been conceded by repealing the above-mentioned regulation. I have since met Maharaja Sahib and other State authorities a number of times. The ban on newspapers has been removed.

I have every reason to hope that the Sikar and Kisan prisoners including our eminent workers Kanwar Netramsingh, Sardar Harlalsingh and Pandit Ladhoooram Joshi are going to be shortly released.

In spite of all that happened so far, the most vital matter that faces Praja Mandal is the Public Societies Act. In this respect, more than one alternative solution has presented itself during talks and thought the final shape of the solution is yet to come. I carry the assurance that the Public Societies Act is shortly to be so amended that it will not be necessary for an organisation to get itself registered, thus enabling all societies to flourish and carry on their work without any let or hindrance.

The Satyagraha which Praja Mandal was forced to undertake was for civil liberties, which included the right of holding public meetings and processions, of forming associations and of printing newspapers. Our demands about meetings and processions are already met. We have the assurance of the state about the unhampered working of the Praja Mandal while I understand that the publication of newspaper is possible under the present Press Laws.

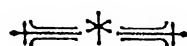
We thus see that the demands for which Satyagraha had to be resorted to have all been nearly acceded and a new page has been turned. We congratulate His Highness for revising the past policy. Among other things about which consultations have taken place is the policy Shikarkhana. The State has been pleased to make some amendments in the Shakar laws and I have reasons to hope that these laws will be further suitably amended to remove all the present hardships of the people. The Maharaja Sahib has ordered that all losses of human life and cattle through wild animals in the past as well as future will be duly compensated.

Our goal of Responsible Government under the aegis of His Highness is always before us and we have to do our best to reach it.

I earnestly appeal to the Maharaja Sahib to appoint an experienced and sympathetic Indian Prime Minister conversant with the sentiments and the language of the people, now that the post has fallen vacant, and thereby lay sure foundations of understanding and harmony with the people.

The recent decision of the State to patronize rural and indigenous industries is a gesture of sympathy in the right direction.

Due to the exigency of Satyagraha, I had suspended the constitution of the Praja Mandal and had appointed a ‘Satyagraha Samiti’. As the conditions necessitating the suspension of the constitution no longer exist, I have dissolved the Satyagraha Samiti and revived the constitution of the Mandal, and from today all its constituent organisations shall function normally’.



31. District Political Conference

AICC Papers, File No. G-12, 1937-39, NMML

*Hindaun**26 November 1939*

A hearty ovation was given to Pandit Hiralal Shastri, General Secretary, Jaipur Rajya Praja Mandal, on his arrival at Hindaun this morning to preside over the District Political Conference, first of its kind in the Rajputana States. The president-elect was taken out in a large procession through the city which was thronged by the people of the town and the surrounding villages, numbering about 15 to 20 thousand. En route from Jaipur to Hindaun the people of Mahavirji station.

The open session of the Conference commenced in the afternoon at a specially erected Pandal. The whole route of the procession as well as the Pandal area—Mohannagar—was tastefully decorated.

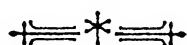
In his speech Sj. Tikaram Paliwal, Chairman Reception Committee, surveyed the history of the Praja Mandal movement and threw light on local conditions regarding education, health, municipal arrangements, trade and commerce etc. He also stressed the desirability of an early establishment of Responsible Government in Jaipur giving a lead to other States of Rajputana.

The president, Pandit Hiralal Shastri, in the course of a very inspiring and impressive speech, dwelt upon the various problems facing Jaipur State subjects and emphasized the necessity of the State authorities changing their reactionary attitude towards public awakening. He stated that although the Praja Mandal was willing to cooperate with the administration in any constructive work, it won't recede cowardly if the government act otherwise, adopt a policy of suppressing people's voice and their right to educate and organise themselves and agitate for the establishment of Responsible Government under the aegis of His Highness the Maharaja. It was intolerable, he expressed, that the Government might show an inclination to cooperate with individuals connected with the even holding responsible offices in the Mandal but refuse to cooperate with Praja Mandal as a body. He wished that the Jaipur Government and the Thikanedars might take Mandal into their confidence and exhorted the public to strengthen the Mandal by becoming its member in large numbers.

An important resolution regarding establishment of Responsible Government, under the aegis of His Highness, within the Jaipur State, supporting one passed at the last session of the Jaipur Rajya Praja Mandal held at Jaipur, was unanimously adopted. The resolution was moved by Sj. Tikaram Paliwal and supported by Pt Harishchandra Sharma, Sj. Chiranjiva Lal Misra, Vice-President, Praja Mandal, and other Praja Mandal leaders.

The Khadi Exhibition, organised by the Karauli Khadi Mandi, was attractive as well as instructive and was much appreciated by the general public which had gathered in thousands to join the session inspite of the persuasive and forcible measures adopted by the authorities to discourage them—mostly the peasantry from the villages of the district—from attending the Conference.

Today's proceedings ended under loud shouts of 'Vande Mataram', 'Praja Mandal Zindabad' and other national slogans, after about hours' sitting.



JODHPUR, ALWAR, BHARATPUR, SIROHI, ETC.

1. Fortnightly Report for the First Half of January 1939

Fortnightly Report, Rajputana, Jaipur, Jodhpur, Kishengarh, first half of January 1939, pp. 12-15, File No. 40-(15)-P/1939, Political Department, Government of India (hereafter GOI), Available in History of Freedom Movement Unit, File No. 80/3R, IV and V, Set No. XI, NAI

Rajputana—Jaipur

The Jaipur Government's decision to refuse registration to the Praja Mandal has been issued. The Prime Minister of Jaipur¹ has informed the Resident² that orders establishing Local Advisory Boards will be issued in a few days, that action is being taken to cause the suspension of cesses in Thikanas, and that suitable preparatory action is being taken to deal with any passive resistance that the Praja Mandal may organise. The President of the Praja Mandal³ has recently addressed the Prime Minister threatening to court arrest on the 1st February: no reply is being sent to this letter.

His Highness is not impressed with any of the names put forward by the Resident, after consultation with the Resident for Rajputana, for the post of Senior Officer, Sikar. This is unfortunate as the matter is one of extreme urgency. Enquires are now being made from the Government of Sind and the Central Provinces whether they can make a suitable officer available.

Rajputana—Jodhpur

The negotiations with the Jagirdars of Marwar to improve the standard of administration in their Thikanas, referred to in the previous summaries, have culminated in an order from High Highness the Maharaja⁴ dated the 11 January 1939.

In this order High Highness refers to the fact that no fewer than 59 Thikanas in Marwar have their own separate judicial powers and that, whatever the history of the 'delegation' of these powers, they must now deal with fast changing times and look to the future of his administration instead of being bound by custom, tradition or precedent. High Highness lays it down as an axiom that such delegation of powers is a benefit to the peasantry when the Jagirdar possesses, firstly integrity and capacity and, secondly sufficient financial means to afford the necessary judicial machinery. Some Jagirdars, he remarks, possess both these qualifications, some one or the other and some possess neither. Consequently, after discussions in which High Highness is glad to acknowledge publicly the loyalty, cooperation and good political sense of the Jagirdars who themselves offered various modifications and improvements in the present judicial system and most of whom offered contribution towards public service, he has decided to continue First Class Judicial powers to 23 named Jagirdars, Second Class powers to 11, and Third Class to 2....

Rajputana—Kishengarh

Congress emissaries are keeping their eye on the labour discontent in the mills at Kishengarh as an exploitable grievance with the usual object of fanning it to a certain stage and then stepping in as mediators in order to claim credit for concessions.

The Chief Member of the State administration has been warned not to negotiate with such emissaries on any account, to examine his labour legislation and deal with trouble through its provisions, and to ask for technical advice before the situation develops political repercussions.

The shortage of fodder in the State is being dealt with by the import, storage and sale of grass by State Agency, in so far as it has not already been met by emigration of cattle.

¹ Oliver Charles Beauchamp.

² Sir Arthur Cunningham, b. 1887; education at University of Aberdeen and Oxford; entered ICS in 1910; joined Indian Political Service in 1915; Resident in Jaipur 1929–31, 33–34; Prime Minister, Alwar 1933; Resident for Rajputana 1937–42

³ Jamnalal Bajaj.

⁴ Umaid Singhji Sahib Bahadur b. 1903, educated at Mayo College, Ajmer; married daughter of Rao Bahadur Thakur Jay Singhji of Umaid Nagar in 1921, heir apparent—Hanwant Singhji Saheb.

2. Alwar Congress Committee: Letter from Government Alwar to Corfield, Resident at Jaipur, 11 January 1939

History of Freedom Movement Unit, File No. 80/3 R, IV and V, Set No. VI, NAI

11 January 1939

My dear Corfield,

The so-called Alwar Congress Committee are reported to have reestablished an office in the Alwar City on the 31st December 1938. The Committee's Office-bearers are:

- (a) President—Abdul Ghafur Jamani
- (b) Secretary—Radha Charan
- (c) Treasurer—Nathu Ram Modi

Jamani, who is a resident of Tijara in the north of the State, was enlisted as a soldier-clerk in the Pratap Platoon in October 1929. Three years' later he was found guilty of misappropriating a pair of shoes and of forging signatures. He himself has no property and his family are in a poor financial condition although his father is said to possess a small property near Tijara. He took part in political agitation in favour of Thakur Kalyan Singh before the present Maharaja¹ acceded to the Alwar Gaddi, and was arrested and sentenced to undergo two years' rigorous imprisonment under a local Act, called the Alwar Seditious Meetings & Publications Act. The sentence was later reduced to one year and he was released from jail in December last. He is said to be in debt, and appears to be a somewhat disreputable opportunist with, I should say, no genuine devotion to the Congress ideals or creed.

Radha Charan, the Secretary, was originally in State Service as Agricultural Teacher on Rs 24 per mensem in the Normal School at Alwar. His work was found unsatisfactory and after about a year the post was abolished, and his services were dispensed with. He has been 'Congress-minded' since he was a young student and was sentenced under the Seditious Meetings Act referred to above to 1 year's rigorous imprisonment, which was later reduced to 4 months' simple imprisonment. He came out of jail in November last and since then has been interesting himself again in politics.

Nathu Ram Modi is a man of some substance. He owns houses and shops etc. in the city and has prosperous family money-lending business. For the last two years or so he has taken interest in Congress activities. He was arrested and sentenced to 1 year's rigorous imprisonment, which was reduced to 4 months' simple imprisonment as in the case of Radha Charan, and came out of Jail in November last.

Beyond the holding of a few private meetings and the hoisting of a Congress flag over the property they have rendered as an Office, this Congress Committee has so far done nothing to

attract notice. At present there are practically no members of the Congress beyond the Committee itself and a few of their relations and friends, numbering probably not more than 50 all told.

Their activities are being watched, but it is not proposed to take any further action at present.

¹ Sawai Maharaj Tej Singh Dev.

3. Confidential diary of the Inspector-General of Police,
Government of Jodhpur, for the Fortnight ending 28 January 1939
History of Freedom Movement Unit, File No. 80/3R, IV and V, Set No. VI, NAI

Jodhpur
28 January 1939

Political meetings at Jodhpur: The members of the Marwar Lok Parishad convened a meeting on the 20th January 1939 from 7.30 to 11.30 p.m. in the office of the Association which was attended by about 40 persons. At the outset the following three resolutions were moved and passed:

1. This meeting expresses its deep sorrow at the untimely demise of Mr Abheymal's sister.
2. This meeting prays to Almighty to restore early recovery of Mr Sewaram Vyas (father of Jai Narain Vyas)
3. This meeting condemns the action of the Jodhpur Government in declaring the Jaipur Praja Mandal an unlawful association and banning the entry of Jamnalal Bajaj into Jodhpur State and exhorts the Jodhpur public to revenge the action of the Jodhpur Government early.

After that the meeting elected Mr Bhinvraj Purohit, BA, LLB, Vakil, to be the President of the Parishad in place of Mr Gattani who resigned his post on account of certain differences between himself and other members of the Parishad. Similarly Mr Kishore Mal Mehta was elected a member of the Working Committee in place of Mr Narshinghdass Lunkar since resigned.

Agitation at Maroth (Sambhar): Reports received from the local Police officers show that some of the people of Maroth intend to create an agitation (word missing) reforms recently introduced by the Jodhpur Government, viz., Introduction of Village Panchayats, creation of a Central Advisory Board and the establishment of District Advisory Boards at headquarters. The persons concerned are reported to be the supporters of some of the Jagirdars who consider that the Panchayat system is likely to cause them loss of influence and prestige. Names of the landholders are being ascertained and the movements of their supporters are closely yet unobtrusively watched.

Hyderabad Day at Jodhpur: In pursuance of the resolution passed by the Nagpur Hindu Mahasabha and All India Arya Pratinidhi Sabha, Sholapur, regarding the observance of Hyderabad Day on the 22nd January 1939. The Arya Samaj, Hindu Mahasabha and the Sanatan Dharam Sabha, Jodhpur, took out a 'Prabhat Pheri' on the morning of 22nd January 1939. The procession started from Umaid Kanya Pathshala and making a round of the city came back to the Pathshala at about 10 am. In the evening a general meeting was held in which the atrocities of the Mohammedans over the Hindus in the Hyderabad Deccan State were described and the indifferent attitude of the Nizam's Government towards the Hindus also condemned. It was further decided to raise money by subscription to help the Hindus of that State and to approach the high authorities to adopt measures to safeguard the interests of the Hindus in that State.

Independence Day at Jodhpur: The political workers of Jodhpur did nothing by way of observing the Independence Day on the 26th January 1939. The students of Jaswant College, Jodhpur, however, held a meeting of the students in the College in the presence of their own Principal and Vice-Principal and passed the following two resolutions:

1. This meeting requests His Highness the Maharaja Sahib Bahadur to safeguard the interests of his subjects, and
2. This meeting requests the Principal of the College to start a Students' Union.

4. Ram Singh Bhati to Bhulabhai Desai,¹ 11 February 1939

AICC Papers, File No. G-35, Part 2, 1939, NMML

11 February 1939

Respected Bhulabhaiji,

Perhaps you would have read the news of the arrest, or rather kidnapping, of Sjt Maniklalji Verma,² Secretary, Mewar Praja Mandal (Ajmer), by the Mewar State Police in Deoli, a small town in the British territory of Ajmer-Mewar Province. The Province of Ajmer-Mewar, as you know, is bounded on all sides by the territories of Indian States of Rajputana. Sjt Maniklalji is conducting a peaceful and non-violent Satyagraha against the order of the Mewar authorities declaring the Praja Mandal an unlawful association and prohibiting the people to take part in its activities.

To refresh your memory I would like to draw your attention to the fact that Deoli is the same town where the Detenues of Bengal were kept and one or two of them died there in mysterious circumstances. But after the inauguration of Provincial Autonomy the Bengal detenues were sent back to their Province and the Camp Jail at Deoli was consequently abolished.

Deoli is situated very near to the Mewar State territory. There is a branch committee of the Mewar Praja Mandal in Deoli. On the 2nd February 1939 Sjt Maniklalji went to Deoli to confer with the Mewar Praja Mandal workers of that town. The Mewar State Police, it seems, received the news of the above meeting and, as it happened, while the workers were proceeding with their discussions, about 15 policemen of the Mewar Police Force armed with lathis arrived on the scene and immediately made a lathi-charge on the workers present. Thereafter the policemen dragged Shri Maniklalji and others and forcibly carried them away from Deoli into the Mewar State territory which is not very distant from the town. As a result of the lathi-charge, dragging and rough-handling of their bodies by the police, it is stated that Shri Maniklalji and his co-workers received some serious injuries. After the above incident nothing has been known as to the whereabouts of the arrested persons. It is reported that the attention of the British Resident in Rajputana and the Government of India was immediately drawn to this very high-handed and exceptionally illegal act of the Mewar State Police, but so far no steps have been taken by the British authorities.

This is, therefore, to request you to kindly see, by interpellations in the Legislative Assembly or otherwise, that the Government of India persuade the Mewar State to set at liberty Shri Maniklalji and others at the place from where they were taken away by them.

Hoping to be excused for the trouble.

P.S. After writing above lines I have received information from a reliable source that the Mewar State treated Shri Maniklalji in a very brutal way. After kidnapping him from the British territory the Mewar Police took him to Jehazpur and then to Udaipur, the Capital of the State. There he was beaten and thrashed so mercilessly that although he was kept at that time in a lonely place, his cries were heard in the surrounding houses which were a little distant from his abode. After overhauling his body in this cruel manner the State authorities have sent him to the Sarada

District of the State, a far away and out of the way place, to intern him there probably for an indefinite period.¹

¹ Bhulabhai Desai, an eminent Advocate, Member of the Congress Working Committee, President, Bombay Provincial Congress Committee.

² Maniklal Verma, a veteran leader of the famous Bijolian peasant struggle established contact with leaders like Gandhi, Tilak and Malviya; 1920-24 directed agrarian movements in Bijolia, Begum and Parsol; leader of Mewar Praja Mandal, 1938 onwards.

³ For Gandhi's comments on this incident, see *Harijan*, 18 February 1939.

5. Confidential diary of the Inspector-General of Police,
Government of Jodhpur, for the Fortnight ending 14 February 1939
History of Freedom Movement Unit, File No. 80/3R, IV and V, Set No. VI, NAI

Jodhpur
14 February 1939

Political meetings at Jodhpur: The members of the Marwar Lok Parishad Jodhpur held a meeting in the office of the Parishad under the Presidentship of Mr Bhinvraj Purohit, BA, LLB, Vakil, from about 8 to 10.30 p.m. on the 4th February 1939. It was attended by about 20 members, prominent amongst them being the following:

1. Jai Narain Vyas,
2. Kanahiya Lal Kalantri,
3. Purushottam Prasad Naiyar,
4. Bhanwar Lal Shroff,
5. Chhagan Raj Chopasniwala,
6. Abhey Mal Jain,
7. Man Mal Jain,
8. Fatehraj Purohit, and
9. Bal Mukund Bissa.

No. 1 Jai Narain Vyas, it may be recalled, had come here on the 12th December 1938 in connection with the sickness of his father who died on the 27th January 1939.

No. 2 Kanahiya Lal Kalantri came here from Bombay on the 3rd February 1939. He is a resident of Khichand (Phalodi). In or about 1923 he had brought seditious and inflammatory leaflets to Jodhpur, and on being detected prosecution was launched against him by the Police. Since then he is living in Bombay and carries on agitation against the State. He had been both the President and the Secretary of the Indian States' Republican League. He was awarded a Gold Medal and Title of Rajasthan Veer by the Rajputana and Central India States' People's Conference held at Pushkar in November 1938, for his distinguished services.

This meeting was specially called to elect delegates to the All India States People's Conference which is going to be held at Ludhiana on 16th February 1939 under the Presidentship of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and the following delegates were elected:

1. Mr Jai Narain Vyas,
2. Mr Kanahiya Lal Kalantri,
3. Mr Purushottam Prasad Naiyar,
4. Mr Bhanwar Lal Shroff,

5. Mr Abhey Mal Jain,
6. Mr Bal Mukund Bissa, and
7. Mr Chhagan Raj Chopasniwala.

Ranchhor Dass Gattani and Ganesh Lal Vyas were nominated as delegates to the All India States People's Conference in this meeting. At the conclusion of the meeting Mr Jai Narain Vyas put up his offer of the Government of Jodhpur for the Membership of the Central Advisory Board and asked the members of the Parishad if it was advisable for him to accept the offer or not. Some discussion was made and it was decided that he should accept the offer and get the Repressive Laws, i.e., Ordinance of 1932, repealed and also Achleshwar Prasad Sharma released by the Government. Jai Narain Vyas replied that he would see if he could influence the Government after joining the Advisory Board and that in case of his failure he would withdraw himself.

Another meeting on behalf of the 'Famine Sufferers Relief Committee' was held on the 9th February 1939 in Girdikot, Jodhpur, under the Presidentship of Mr Purushottam Prasad Naiyar which was attended by about 400 persons. A number of speeches were delivered by Ranchhor Dass Gattani, Bhanwar Lal Shroff and others in which the sufferings of the famine-stricken people and the cattle were related and appeals were made to the public to donate as much as they conveniently could towards the funds of the Famine Relief Committee. Mr Jai Narain also attended this meeting and in his speech he made a reference to the attitude of the Lok Parishad as regards the Famine Relief work. He exhorted the audience not to criticise the actions of the Government at this moment but to cooperate with them, beg donations from door to door and show the State officials some real work in this connection so that they might realise the true services of the public and the members of the Lok Parishad and clear their misunderstanding. Subscriptions were raised in the meeting and fund of Rs 30 was realised from the audience towards the fund of the Famine Relief Committee.

6. Confidential diary¹ of the Inspector-General of Police, Government of Jodhpur, for the Fortnight ending 14 March 1939

History of Freedom Movement Unit, File No. 80/3R, IV and V, Set No. VI, NAI

Jodhpur
15 March 1939

Departure of Congress Volunteers to Jaipur: The District Superintendent of Police, Sojat, informs that on the 23rd February 1939 a party consisting of 6 Congress volunteers headed by Swami Satya Narain passed through Rani on their way to Agra from Bombay. One Anand Ram Dave, a political worker of Rani, went upto Erinpura Road to receive the party and at Rani he entertained them with tea and fruits and garlanded them. Anand Ram Dave crying out 'Mahatma Gandhi ki Jai' informed the public that they would go to Agra and thence to Jaipur for Satyagraha. Anand Ram Dave also went away with the party. The Headmaster, Natverlal, of Shrimali School, Rani, was also present at the Railway Station with his students all clad in Khaddar and Gandhi caps to give ovation to the party. They also cried out national slogans. At Marwar Junction Railway Station the party distributed a vernacular leaflet issued by Jaipur Raj Praja Mandal, Bombay, in which the public has been exhorted to proceed to Jaipur in large numbers.

Departure of Satyagrahis to Hyderabad Deccan: A party consisting of the following five Arya Samajists of Jodhpur left for Hyderabad Deccan by 5 UP train on the 19th February 1939, to offer Satyagraha there. This party would join the party of Kunwar Chand Karan Sharda, Advocate, Ajmer, who has been proclaimed as a second dictator of Satyagraha in Hyderabad Deccan:

1. Parasram, a peon of Sardarpura Branch of Jodhpur
2. Ram Sukh Sonar of Jodhpur
3. Lakshmi Narain Shastri of Jodhpur
4. Rudra Dutt of Jodhpur
5. Shivdutta of Jodhpur

A second party consisting of the following Arya Samaj volunteers also left Jodhpur by the 5 UP train on 11.3.1939 for Sholapur from where they would proceed to Hyderabad Deccan for Satyagraha:

1. Swami Permanand
2. Panne Singh, son of Ishwar Singh
3. Mangilal
4. Bhika son of Hukma Mali
5. Hari Dutta, son of Kundanmal Asopa and
6. Ram Avtar of Jodhpur.

Congress Committee meeting at Jodhpur: On the 20th February 1939, a general meeting of the Nagar Congress Committee, Jodhpur was held in its office in which the report of the closing year was read by Abhey Mal Jain and the following office-bearers besides some members elected:

President—Purushottam Prasad Naiyar
Vice-President—Praj Raj Bhandari
Joint Secretary—Inder Mal Jain
Cashier—Bhanwar Lal Shroff.

Departure of Jodhpur Political workers to attend the Tripuri National Congress: The following political workers of Jodhpur of the Indian National Congress there. The intimation of their departure has duly been communicated to the Superintendent of Police, Jubbulpore.

1. Jai Narain Vyas, a member of the Indian National Congress.
2. Raj Purohit, member of the Congress Committee who has been selected delegate to the Tripuri Session.
3. Ranchhor Dass Gattani, BA, LLB, a member of the Nagar Congress Committee and Lok Parishad Jodhpur.
4. Purushottam Prasad Naiyar, President Nagar Congress Committee, Jodhpur.
5. Nar Singh Das Lunkar, Member of the Nagar Congress Committee and Marwar Lok Parishad.
6. Parasram Shukla, Member of the Nagar Congress Committee and Lok Parishad Jodhpur.

Political meeting at Jodhpur: On behalf of the Marwar Lok Parishad Jodhpur a public meeting was held in Girdikot on 3.3.1939 from 8 to 10 p.m. under the Presidentship of Mr Bhim Raj, BA, LLB, which was attended by about 1,000 men. Jai Narain Vyas made a very lengthy speech in this meeting. At the outset he made a reference to the various forms of Government prevalent in Europe and said that in many European countries also people were not satisfied with the form of Government prevailing in their countries. In India the Congress, he said, wanted complete independence which the present Federation would not give and this is why it is so vehemently opposed by the public both in British India and in Native States. By complete independence the Indians mean the management of their affairs by themselves wherein the Rajas and Nawabs of different States should remain as trustee of the Public. He then quoted the example of a certain State in Oudh, the ruler of which has established an assembly with control over the State budget and the personal budget of the Raja and power to appoint Chief Minister who would run the

administration of the State. This, he said, was the best form of Government which every ruler in India should adopt. In Jodhpur, he said, the Maharaja and the Chief Minister were at the helm of the administration. There should be one assembly also elected by the public to whom both the Maharaja and the Chief Minister should be made responsible.

¹ The diaries were prepared by H.A. Carless, Inspector General of Police, Jodhpur. They were dispatched on 10th and 25th of each month to the Resident, Western Rajputana States.

7. Fortnightly diary of the Inspector-General of Police,
Government of Jodhpur, for the Fortnight ending 14 and 28 April 1939
History of Freedom Movement Unit, File No. 80/3R, IV and V, Set No. VI, NAI

Jodhpur
2 May 1939

Establishment of Marwar Mitra Sabha at Jodhpur also, viz., Mr Sohanlal Manihar, Advocate, Mr Harnath alias Talooji, retired Head Clerk of Mehka Khas has been noticed taking interest in the activities of the Marwar Lok Parishad and showed some intention to join it, but subsequently they gave up the idea of joining the Parishad and with the help of some leading lawyers and retired State servants they have started a new association named Marwar Mitra Sabha, the aims and objects of which are to reform the political, social and religious conditions of Marwar. The following persons were elected office-bearers of the Sabha:

1. President—Mr Harnath alias Talooji
2. Vice-President—Mr Sohanlal Manihar, Advocate
3. Secretary—Mr Abdul Rehman Khan retired IP
4. Joint Secretary—Mr Manohar Mal Dhadda
5. Treasurer—Mr Ram Raj Druggist

On the 2nd April 1939 a confidential meeting of the above Sabha was held at the house of Mr Sohanlal Manihar under the Presidentship of Mr Harnath which was attended by about 20 persons including some Vakils. In the meeting it was decided that only Marwaries should be enrolled in the State Service and that court language should in future be Marwari and not English and that a petition should be submitted to His Highness, the Maharaja Sahib Bahadur in this connection.

National Week at Jodhpur: The political workers of Jodhpur observed National Week at Jodhpur from 1st April to the 15th April 1939 by taking out Khaddar Pheries in the city. During the fortnight they hawked Khaddar worth about Rs 400. Some students also took part in the celebrations.

Activities in Jodhpur in connection with Hyderabad Deccan Satyagraha: A public meeting of the local Hindus was held at Jodhpur in the Asop House on the 4th April under the Presidentship of Laxmanji Vedant Shastri of Kotah from 8.30 p.m. to 11 p.m. which was attended by about 1,500 men. The following 3 resolutions were discussed in the meeting and unanimously passed:

- (a) This meeting strongly opposes the repression done to the Hindus in Hyderabad Deccan State and requests the Nizam to accede to their legitimate demands and that the people of Jodhpur cherish full sympathy towards Hyderabad Satyagraha.
- (b) This meeting expresses its gratitude towards Maharaj Shankaracharya for his full support and sympathy towards the Hyderabad Satyagraha.

- (c) This meeting sympathises with the Hindus of Delhi for carrying on Satyagraha in connection with Sheo Mandir there and assures its full support and assistance in the struggle.

Pandit Jia Lal of Ajmer, who headed the 3rd Jatha Satyagraha to Hyderabad, had made a demand for 50 volunteers from Jodhpur State for joining the Satyagraha in Hyderabad Deccan. The local Arya Samaj accordingly left no stone unturned to recruit the required number of volunteers for the purpose both from the city of Jodhpur and the district. On the 14th April 1939 these volunteers were taken out in a procession and sent to Marwar Junction by Rail where they were to join the party of Pandit Jia Lal.

The local Arya Samaj observed Hyderabad Day on 22nd April 1939 by taking out a Prabhat Pheri of the members of Hindu Sewa Mandal, Marwar Sanatan Dharam Sabha, Brahman Navyuwak Mandal and other associations. The Pheri started at about 5.15 a.m. and passing through the main localities terminated at 7.30 a.m. peacefully at the Umaid Kanya Pathsala outside Sajoti Gate Jodhpur.

In the evening a public meeting was also held in the same Kanya Pathsala from 8.15 to 10 p.m. under the Presidentship of Swami Swarupa Nand which was attended by about 500 persons. In the meeting the following 5 resolutions were discussed and passed:

1. This meeting congratulates Veer Vankat and Permanand who have suffered tortures in the Hyderabad jail for the sake of their religion.
2. This meeting condemns the action of Nizam's Government in transferring Kunwar Chandkaran Sharda to Kareem Nagar which is called the Kala Pani of Hyderabad.
3. This meeting looks with hatred and contempt the maltreatment meted out to the Satyagrahis at the hands of the 'Gundas' and declares it to be a specimen of Nizam's misrule.
4. This meeting assures the Arya Sabha and the Hindu Sabha that they would receive its full support till the termination of the Satyagraha. And
5. This meeting congratulates Dhurendra Shastri and his comrades an offering Satyagraha in the Hyderabad State.

Political activities at Jodhpur: On the 9th April 1939 a political meeting was held under the auspices of the Marwar Lok Parishad in its office at about 8.30 p.m. with Mr Bhinvraj Purohit in the chair. It was attended by about 150 men. At the outset some speeches were made and the following resolutions were discussed and passed:

- (a) This meeting of the Marwar Lok Parishad, looking to the needs of the time and very carefully keeping in view the neighbouring atmosphere humbly requests the Jodhpur State authorities to look to the present state of affairs in India and repeal all the repressive laws viz., Typewriter's Act, Marwar Sedition Act, Ordinance of 1932, the Press Act etc.,
- (b) That Jai Narain Vyas should get these demands fulfilled through the Central Advisory Board for these for which if he does not succeed agitation should be made by the Lok Parishad.

Mr Jai Narain Vyas with a couple of other members of the Marwar Lok Parishad visited Sursagar on the 6th April 1939 and saw prominent contractors such as Shankerlal, Lichmar etc. and exhorted them to get themselves elected as members of the Marwar Lok Parishad. Jai Narain Vyas further assured them that by joining the Parishad all their troubles would be removed. As a result of the persuasion some of the contractors did become the members of the Parishad by paying Rs 4 each.

On the 16th April again a political meeting was held under the auspices of the Marwar Lok Parishad which was attended by about 75 persons. It has been decided to take out Prabhat Pheries on behalf of the Mandal by singing National songs. So far they have not commenced taking out Prabhat Pheries.

Activities of Mohammedan at Jodhpur: The Mohammedans youths of Jodhpur have established a new association under the title of 'Young Muslim Association', the aims and objects of which are known to be as under:

- (1) to maintain unity amongst the Musalmans.
- (2) to maintain punctuality of Nimaj (sic) amongst Mohammedans, and
- (3) to spread education amongst the Musalmans.

The following Musalmans collected subscriptions in the hotels outside and inside Sojati Gate for the help of the Musalmans at Jaipur who have left Jaipur in connection with the Jama Masjid firing:

1. Noor Mohd., Teli
2. Amuni Chhipa
3. Abdul Rehman Mertia Silawat
4. Umar Mertia Silawat, and
5. Abdul Rehman Mertia Silawat

They have so far collected about Rs 50

8. Bharatpur State Satyagraha

Hindustan Times, 5 July 1939

Mattra
3 July 1939

The Bharatpur States people's Conference was held at Gobarthan, an important town in Muttra district, on June 30 and July 1, with Pt S.K. Dutt Paliwal¹, MLA (Central), in the chair. In the morning the Praja Mandal flag was unfurled by Principal Rao Gopilal Yadav, President of the Praja Mandal. In the evening a mammoth procession of the President-elect of the Conference was taken out through the main bazaars of the town. After 8 pm the open session of the Conference commences with a national song, followed by the address of Principal Gopilal Yadav, who was also the Chairman of the Reception Committee.

Mr Jugal Kishore Chaturvedi², Publicity Secretary of the Praja Mandal, read certain messages received from Pt Jawaharlal Nehru and others, wishing the Conference success. Then Pt Paliwal delivered his Presidential address surveying the history of the movement in Indian State and explaining the reasonable demands.

Next day about 8 thousand people from Bharatpur State, in spite of police obstacles to prevent them from attending the Conference, attended it, and three resolutions were unanimously adopted. The first resolution, moved by Pt Revati Sharan Sharma and seconded by Chobey Sanwal Prasadji, emphasized the necessity of intensifying the Satyagraha movement including the manufacturing of salt and non-payment of Customs Duty and rent and revenue, if the demands of the Praja Mandal were not acceded. The resolution, seconded by Mr Jugal Kishore Chaturvedi and Mr Kishan Lal Joshi, congratulated the Satyagrahis for their sacrifices and incarcerations for the sake of the people of the State. The third resolution, moved and seconded by Pt Revati Sharma

and Mr Tarakeshwar Sharma, expressed sympathy with the people of the Indian States, who are groaning under the heels of the autocrats.

¹ S.K. Dutt Paliwal (1895–1968), MA in Economics from Allahabad University in 1920; could not finish Law as he joined freedom struggle; 1925 started his own weekly called *Sainik*; 1940, Director of the Congress Movement in UP; imprisoned from 1940–42 and again from 1943–45; author of '*Samvada*' and '*Seva Marga*'; Member of Central Legislative Assembly.

² Jugal Kishore Chaturvedi (b.1904); educated at Mathura, Bharatpur and Jaipur; worked as a teacher from 1926–31; was Headmaster of Mathura Chaturvedi Vidyalaya; joined the movement for recognition of Praja Mandal; elected to Bharatpur Municipal Board in 1940, but resigned to participate in all political movements in Bharatpur from 1939–49; on formation of Matsya Union consisting of Alwar, Bharatpur, Dholpur and Karauli, Chaturvedi became its Deputy Chief Minister; resigned from Congress in 1961 and formed Lokrajya Parishad.

9. On Haroti Praja Mandal, Kotah: Police report on the Haroti Praja Mandal, Kotah, sent to the Political Agent, Eastern Rajputana, 15 September 1939

History of Freedom Movement Unit, File No. 1/3 R, IV & V, NAI

15 September 1939

An organisation in the name of Haroti Praja Mandal came into existence in the State in the year 1935. Its activities then were confined to town areas only and the membership was quite insignificant. The State treated the agitation, which has little response from the sensible class, with indifference. The so-called political consciousness and spirit of agitation in other States had also its repercussions here and the organisation was lately transformed into 'Kota Rajya Praja Mandal', its sphere of activity having also been extended even to rural areas since March last. The organizers have since then approached the villagers, particularly the agriculturist class and have attracted their attention towards criticizing the Government by false and misleading propaganda. A conference was held at Mangrol on the 21st, 22nd and 23rd of May 1939, villagers were invited to attend it in large numbers, invitations were sent also to some of the Congress leaders from outside but only a few of them came. The conference was attended by about 3,000 people mostly coming from the neighbouring villages and the residents of the town of Mangrol which is the headquarters of a *nizamat* and is situated at a distance of 60 miles in the North East of Kota. More than 80 per cent of the gathering were mere spectators. Fiery speeches were made exhorting people against the administration and bringing false and baseless insinuation against officers, the main speaker being Nainu Ram Sharma, an ex-sub-Inspector of Kota police who had to resign his service about 20 years ago and who later on was imprisoned for some time for his objectionable activities in the Bundi State. His father holds a small tenancy of agricultural land and his own business is to roam (sic) about and pose as a great educational and political-social reformer. He also assumed the Presidentship of so-called Congress in Kota but has since resigned. He now designates himself as the President of the Kota Rajya Praja Mandal. There are also a few other local agitators, who spoke at the conference but are practically unimportant but I want to draw your attention particularly to the attendance of people from Ajmer who made speeches here and supported the movement by encouraging local agitators with their visits. These are the following:

1. Pt Gauri Shankar Bhargava, who admitting that the Kota Raj has got a good reputation, made indiscreet remarks about the responsible officers of the State and criticized the Government from imperfect knowledge apparently depending upon the information supplied by the agitators without verifying the facts....

2. Baba Narsingh Das—this fellow has earned notoriety by his activities in the Province of Ajmer-Mewar and I understand is undergoing a trial in a criminal case in that province. He also made a speech in which objectionable language was used....
3. Bheravallal Nandwaan—is at present employed in the Commercial Press, Delhi. He takes part in the Congress activities of Ajmer and came here before this morning to check accounts of the Congress office, Kotah, with Haribhai Kinker, an outsider. He is an unscrupulous man and took very keen interest in the proceedings and the meetings and though he himself did not make a speech, he took part in applauding the speakers and encouraging people to cheer and shout slogans. This man began his career as a teacher in the State but was dismissed. Then he took service in the Education Department of the Gwalior State and now for some years past has been roaming about in search of living and before he went to Delhi, mostly lived at Ajmer, where his chief supporter is Mr Ram Narain Chowdhari of the Navjyoti.
4. Haribhai Keniker—A Congressman who is perhaps known to you for his activities in Ajmer and Bewar.
5. Mrs Gauri Shankar Bhargava also came and presided over the *Mahila Sammelan* (Ladies meeting) in the pandal of the conference. She made a speech which was not very objectionable, though parts of it were open to criticism.

10. Satyagraha in Bharatpur: Jugal Kishore Chaturvedi, Publicity Secretary to the President, All India States People's Conference

AISPC Papers, Bharatpur Rajya Praja Mandal, Satyagraha Movement in the State for Responsible Government, 1939-42, File No. 14, NMML

6 October 1939

Sir,

Permit me to recall to your memory that in the light of the talks we had with you at the Muttra Junction to include in the agenda for discussion at Wardha the state of affairs at Bharatpur, where inspite of six months continuous Satyagraha movement the same old order is still persisting. When States like Hyderabad and Jaipur have yielded to popular demands and in the latter State even the Praja Mandal has been recognised as a legal body to function freely, the Dewan¹ of Bharatpur is keeping quite an uncompromising and stiff attitude, so much so that he does not wish to hear anything on behalf of the Praja Mandal so long as it bears this name. Arrest and convictions are going on daily. About seven hundred persons have offered Satyagraha so far of whom nearly 250 (including 20 ladies) are undergoing imprisonment in the State Jail—their sentences varying from 1 ¼ years to 3 years RI.

Our minimum demand that we submitted to the Dewan, along with the ultimatum, are as follows:

1. Lifting of the ban from the Praja Mandal.
2. Withdrawing all repressive laws which deprive the public of the freedom of speech, press and association.
3. Promulgation of the 'Sashan Samiti' with necessary changes which the late Maharaja introduced to prepare the people of the State to govern on the lines of Responsible Government, but which was subsequently nipped in the bud by the then Dewan of the State.

All the above demands are nothing but the creation of the present administration. The present Dewan has been willfully avoiding even to consider them on the false plea that he has no power to do anything new under the minority administration.

Now we look to you for our future guidance and sagely advice in this connection.

¹ Dewan—A.V. Ramanathan, earlier Minister for Law, Mysore State; Vice-President and Dewan of Council, Mewar, 1939; exhibited a more liberal outlook; rehailed administration of State.

11. Note on the Praja Mandal agitation in the Bharatpur State: Note submitted to Major C.W.L. Harvey, Chief Minister of Alwar State

Rajputana State Agency Papers, Roll No. 23, NAI

23 October 1939

About the middle of 1938, a body known as the Bharatpur Rajya Praja Mandal applied for registration under the Bharatpur Criminal Law Amendment Act. Most of the office-bearers and committee members were well-known police-suspects and political agitators, and although all gave addresses inside the State several were in fact living elsewhere. Accordingly, the Council of State unanimously decided to reject the application. Under the law of the State, the Praja Mandal thus automatically became an 'unlawful association'. For some months the Mandal took no active steps within State territory but at a series of public meetings held on the borders of the State the administrations of Bharatpur and other States were attacked.

On the 9th April, 1939, the President of the Praja Mandal sent an 'Ultimatum' to the President, (for launching) 'civil disobedience' unless

1. the ban on the Praja Mandal was removed,
2. repressive laws were repealed, and
3. the Shashan Samitee Vidhan, an unworkable paper Parliament planned by the late Maharaja for his own ends, was re-inaugurated.

On the 15th April, in a detailed reply, the Darbar rejected the three requests made by the Praja Mandal pointing out that the newly-inaugurated Central Advisory Committee provided a constitution forum in the face of which the Mandal, had no *raison d'être*. On 21st April, 1939 the Mandal, however, started an active campaign in the State and at various places. Processions were organised and violent speeches were delivered by members of the Praja Mandal. On the 11th May 1939 the President, Council of State, addressing the second meeting of the Central Advisory Committee, which was attended by several Praja Mandal workers, made a final appeal for cooperation, adding a clear warning that the tactics hitherto followed by the Praja Mandal could no longer be allowed to continue. This warning the Praja Mandal openly defied by holding an unlawful meeting on the same day, i.e. the 11th May 1939. Such a challenge was inevitably accepted and 13 persons (the first arrests) were therefore arrested. Since that date a spasmodic agitation has been continued mostly by small Jathas from outside the State and in the form of Hartals in celebration of various 'Days'. For the first time on 21st June a number of women courted arrest in Bharatpur and 4 of them were arrested by special Women Constables. By the first week of August all political prisoners, men and women, were transferred to new quarters and a set of rules governing Special Division Convicts was brought into use. To cope with the Hartal nuisance, which had the

support of certain members of the Shopkeeper class, notices were served in July on 10 selected shopkeepers of Bharatpur. This had the desired effect.

From August onwards the agitation became less and less real and it was increasingly apparent that the movement would have died had not inspiration continued from outside. After a brief attempt to establish Headquarters in State territory and some wanderings in Agra and Muttra districts the Headquarters were finally sited at Sonkh (United Provinces) where they have since remained. In his farewell address to the Central Advisory Committee on behalf of the Minority Administration on the 19th October, the President, Council of State,¹ restated the existing policy that the State Government was prepared to move with the times, but that such movements should take the form of orderly progress and should not be a hasty upsetting of the old traditions and established institutions, that the Advisory Committee system provided a framework within which such progress could be made but that it was recognised that there was still room for improvement. He declared that the administration was prepared to recognise a popular association composed of all shades of opinion in the State and approved aims and objects and suggested that the Praja Mandal should dissolve and give way to such an association. The Praja Mandal later gave a voluntary assurance to abstain from all demonstrations during the Dussehra and Investiture celebrations and is said to be considering making an offer to suspend the movement unconditionally and indefinitely. The President, Council of State, has therefore made it clear that even if such an offer is made there can be no guarantee that the State will accept it and the Praja Mandal, if they really desired peace, must accept the terms restated in his Address to the Central Advisory Committee.

It seems safe to make the following general conclusions:

- i. the agitation has at no time been so successful as the Congress Press has alleged. On the whole citizens of even Bharatpur itself have often for the first time been informed of demonstrations in the city by reports in the Press usually emanating from Muttra,
- ii. the agriculturist, who forms the backbone of the State, has not been really touched,
- iii. the policy of selective arrests has been fully justified. No mass-arrests have been made and even of those detained no more than some 40 per cent have been prosecuted. During the current month the average number in Jail has been only about 120.

¹ Shri Brijendra Singh, b. 1908; succeeded to the throne of Bharatpur, 1929; received ruling powers in 1939; President, Council of State; married sister of Maharaja of Mysore

12. Discontent Brewing in Sirohi State: Typescript, issued by D.P. Singhji, 'For Publicity' AISPC Papers, File No. 182(ii)/1939, NMML

1 December 1939

On one pretext or other, the State has arrested 16 persons in the last three weeks when the Praja Mandal has been functioning as an unlawful body. Most of the arrested persons are either active Praja Mandal workers or are strongly Praja Mandal-minded. But while the Praja Mandal have been carrying on their activities with unabated vigour, the State authorities¹ are more or less silent, perhaps watching the reaction on the public mind, or perhaps hoping in vain that the people will tire out themselves and the workers will resume the domestic duties. Far from that, even after the declaration that Praja Mandal is an unlawful association and the subsequent arrests, people throng in sufficiently large numbers in meetings and processions wherever organised by Praja Mandal workers. Not only that, the President, Sirohi Rajya Praja Mandal, is daily receiving letters from

enthusiasts—persons eager to suffer for the noble cause. They have been asked to wait till the State makes it essential for them to take places by arresting the present set of workers. Praja Mandal stands for conciliation and not conflict. The immediate demands of the Praja Mandal are: 1. full civil liberties, 2. appointment of an impartial Enquiry Committee to enquire into all the grievances of the people referred to in the various petitions submitted to His Highness, and to recommend on those points and constitutional reforms, and 3. reduction in the present high expenditure which leaves very little for public welfare works.

The utter disregard of these simple points by the State authorities have cost them the sympathy of many a loyal person, for which the present revenue policy is also to an extent responsible. There is discontent among every section in the State; the Mahajans are looked with suspicion and disfavour by the State authorities ever since the Mahajan agitation of 1936; the Jagirdars are discontented on account of the recent increase in State dues, and the peasantry is very badly handled and cruelly treated by the Revenue Department which levies and exacts a number of big and small taxes from them and hardly leaves enough for them to keep body and soul together. The Trouble is brewing all round, and no amount of repression can check the rush of events that must come sooner or later.

Perhaps the State authorities know all this and hence the hesitation and the present hitch in the plan of ruthless repression.

¹ Maharao Sir Sarup Ram Singh, GCIE, KCSI ruler of Sirohi. State ruled by the Maharao with the assistance of a Council, consisting of Chief Minister, Rao Bahadur Ichhashander K Pandya, BA, LLB and 2 other members.

13. The Marwar Lok Parishad: Jai Narayan Vyas¹ to Jawaharlal Nehru, 8 December 1939

Miscellaneous Papers of Marwar Lok Parishad, Jodhpur, File No. 2, Bundle No. 4, 1930–45
Jai Narayan Vyas Papers, File No. 5, NMML

Indo-Europa Trade Co.
662, Chandni Chowk,
Delhi
8 December 1939

My dear Panditji,

The War resolution of the Congress seems to have annoyed many of the Indian states where there are Britishers as Chief Ministers or Diwans. The Jodhpur State which was always begging for our cooperation is now on war path, specially after the resolution having been endorsed by the All India States People's Conference and its Jodhpur State organisation, the Marwar Lok Parishad. The act of representing the case of the famine-stricken people by the Lok Parishad has been considered as a subversive activity and the establishment of branches in the district as attempts to set up parallel government in the State. The attitude of Sir Donald, the Chief Minister of the Jodhpur State, was a great surprise for me when he said such things and characterised the Congress resolution as a move 'that would be detested by all sensible people.'

I am now in Delhi and intend to remain outside the State for some time till all arrangements are not made pucca to face the repression which the Government now wishes to launch.

I am submitting herewith a note on the famine problem of the State which will appraise you of the developments there.

You know I have tried to give all cooperation to the State and avoided clashes. We had been moving in a most constitutional manner in the direction of organising our people and representing their grievances but the red tapism that exists there would not allow us even to exist. As such I hope you would appreciate our position and approve of our giving a fight to the authorities if they do not allow us to carry on our constitutional and peaceful activities.

When is the Standing Committee meeting?

¹ Jai Narayan Vyas (1898–1963); education from Punjab University; influenced in 1919 by Gandhi, Nehru and Sardar Patel, organised political activity in Jodhpur; founder of Marwar Sewa Sangh; General Secretary of All India States People's Conference from 1939–49; President, Rajputana Provincial Congress Committee; Prime Minister of Jodhpur State for a short while; Chief Minister of Rajasthan after Independence.

14. Agitation in Sirohi

Typescript 'For Favour of Publicity', AISPC Papers, File No.182(ii)/1939, NMML

9 December 1939

Eighth day of the month has become a memorable day for the people of Sirohi State, as it was on this day that a first lathi charge was made by the Police and its hirelings on the peaceful citizens at a public meeting; it was on this day of the last month that the Praja Mandal was declared unlawful by the Darbar. This being the importance, it was observed yesterday. Meetings and Pheris were organised at all important places in and outside the State and several persons kept partial fasts.

In Sirohi, usual Pheri was taken out at about 7.45 p.m. which passed through important streets of the town, the processionists shouting Praja Mandal Zindabad, Inquilab Zindabad and other slogans. The Pheri ended at Azad Maidan where after some songs, a public meeting was held. Speeches were delivered by Shri Tarachandra Dosi, Dulichand Singhi and Shri Gokulbhai Bhatt, President, Sirohi Rajya Praja Mandal. Shri Bhatt spoke for about an hour and was heard with rapt attention by the audience. He exhorted the people to burn their boats and join the peaceful band of Praja Mandal soldiers who were out to save the honour of Sirohi people, and asked them to prepare themselves for heavy sacrifices. He concluded by saying that people will keep up their balance of mind and remain non-violent even under strong provocation, their behaviour at the time of various lathi charges till now gave him good hopes for the future. A resolution requesting His Highness to grant civil liberties and remove people's grievances was unanimously passed.

The meeting concluded with a song by a girl and Praja Mandal ki Jai.

15. Report on Praja Mandal Agitation in Sirohi from August–December 1939: Report submitted by D.P. Singhji, Secretary of the Sirohi Praja Mandal
AISPC Papers, File No. 192(ii)/1939, NMML

21 December 1939

Public Societies Act came in the last week of July. It required all existing associations to get them registered within one month of its introduction. It contained certain impossible and dishonourable conditions to be fulfilled before an association could be registered by the State Government (a copy of the Act and that of the supplementary Notification were sent to you). The Praja Mandal made representations to the Chief Minister¹ and to His Highness,² and requested them to repeal

the Act or to amend it suitably. A 'Protest Day' was observed on 12th August when meetings were held at all important towns and villages throughout the State and outside the State to protest against the Act. Perhaps this made some effect on the authorities and twenty days were extended for all existing associations to get registered. Representations continued and one condition of the Notification was radically amended. But that was not enough. Eighth day of September was the last day of registration; the Praja Mandal did not apply for it and all expected action to be taken by the State Government against the Praja Mandal, which organised a meeting on that night at Sirohi. While Shri Gokulbhai Bhatt, the President was speaking, there came a police party all of a sudden, laid hands on the Praja Mandal flag and began to snatch it. This was resisted by the President and a few others who did not leave hold of the flag even under lathi blows. A few goondas also had joined the police party and a lathi charge began on the peaceful audience which remained non-violent throughout. This lasted for about 5-7 minutes; nearly forty persons sustained injuries.

Another twenty days were extended for the registration, representations continued to the Chief Minister, His Highness and the Resident¹ but to no avail. Since 28th September, the Praja Mandal has been an unregistered body. But no action was taken until about 5 weeks when Praja Mandal was declared as unlawful by an extraordinary issue of the State Gazette dated 8th November which contained chimerical, vague and unfounded charges against the Praja Mandal. A Hartal was going on in Sheoganj thana, an important town of Sirohi State, on account of bungling by the Police in a double murder case which roused public opinion to such an extent that the whole town unanimously declared Hartal for an indefinite period till the case was investigated by some competent and impartial Police Official. It was alleged in the Gazette that the Hartal was initiated and promoted by the Praja Mandal who refuted this allegation along with others and offered to prove otherwise. Seven arrests were made under Defence of India Act; the Hartal continued; more arrests were made. But nothing could be found against any of the Praja Mandal workers. The Hartal came to an end on 16th November after this, three Praja Mandal workers were arrested under Section 147 CrPC at Sheoganj. Two were arrested at Abu Road and one at Rohira under the Societies Act. After that, no arrests have been made. Of Course, two mild lathi charges were made at Rohira on 5th December, one on people taking out an evening Pheri and another on the meeting place the same night. But the Praja Mandal activities are going on along with representations to the State Government and the Resident. The attitude of the Chief Ministers and the IGP has not been very bad; the majority of workers are still free. Evening Pheris and meetings are held whenever and wherever the President instructs to hold.

At present talks are going on between Shri Gokulbhai Bhatt and Mr Laird McGregor,⁴ for an honourable settlement.

What is going on in Sirohi in short is:

1. Civil liberties denied.
2. Sham Enquiry Committee, to enquire into a few items, instituted in place of an impartial and real Enquiry Committee to enquire into all the grievances of the people; it has taken months and has done little.
3. Famine thickening; cattle dying of starvation, the Official Famine Relief Committee practically doing nothing.
4. Repression begun; undue pressure of police complained of, particularly at Sheoganj.
5. People determined to bravely face the oppression.

¹ Rao Bahadur Ichhashander K Pandya, BA and LLB; Chief Minister of Sirohi; carried on administration through Council of State consisting of himself and two other members.

² Sarup Ram Singh, Raja of Sirohi; b. 1888; succeeded to the throne 1920.

³ Arthur Cunningham (details given earlier)

⁴ ICS (retired) Chief Minister, Sirohi State in 1939.

16. Political Prisoners' Day: Report on the Praja Mandal agitation in Sirohi from August–December 1939

AISPC Papers, File No. 182(ii)/1939, NMML

28 December 1939

A procession was taken out yesterday evening which passed through the main streets of the town, people shouting slogans like 'Praja Mandal Zindabad', 'Inquilab Zindabad' etc. It turned into a meeting later on where a Patrika issued under the signatures of the Joint Secretaries of Sirohi Rajya Praja Mandal was read out and then Shri Purshotambhai addressed the gathering. During the speech, he criticized in scathing terms the present laissez-faire policy of the State Government in every matter. While referring to the deplorable indifference that the State Government was exhibiting with regard to the famine conditions existing in the State, he appealed to the State subjects to organise themselves under the Praja Mandal flag and make their voices felt by self-sacrifice and suffering. While concluding, he gave a note of warning to the powers that be that no association whatsoever with a strong public opinion behind it can be suppressed or crushed by declaring it unlawful or by taking recourse to repressive measures.

IV GUJARAT: BARODA AND RAJPIPLA

1. Fortnightly Report, Gujarat States, first half of January 1939

Fortnightly Report, Gujarat States, Rajpipla, Cambay, Rewa Kantha, first half of January 1939, pp. 28–33, File No. 40(15)–P/1939, Political Department, available in File No. 80/3 R IV & V, Set No. XI, History of Freedom Movement Unit

Gujarat States—Rajputana

During the fortnight there was no active agitation in the State. The organizers of the Lok Sabha restricted themselves to holding meetings at which they impressed upon the general public the urgent need for acquiring Responsible Government. In addition to a notification issued before the end of December allowing cultivators to cut Mowhra trees growing on their lands free of any fee, and extending facilities to enable cultivators to build houses in their villages, His Highness¹ issued during the fortnight a second notification granting remissions in land revenue ranging from 12.5 per cent to 25 per cent. His Highness also had declared that he will transfer the control of the local Fund Bodies to the people subject to minor local reservations and to the general supervisions of the State. The restrictions imposed on newspapers and the press have also been removed. There appears to be general satisfaction at these measures. His Highness proposes to tour through the State during this month.

Gujarat States—Cambay

Leaders of the Praja Mandal have continued to pay visits to villages in the States, almost all of which have now been visited by them. They asked the cultivators to make sure that the annual valuation of crops was not made by the Circle Inspector and signed by a few persons residing in

the villages concerned. They suggested that, if need be, competent person from outside might be invited. Leaders of the various branches of the Praja Mandal also toured the villages of Golana under the leadership of Malubuaiathabhai and Harilal Girdhar and the village of Mitli are the most affected. Five leaders of the Praja Mandal whilst returning from Mitli on the 28th of December had halted at Panded to hold a public meeting without the sanction of the state. They were prosecuted in the Magistrate's Court and the hearing will be on the 18th January. As a sequel to this prosecution, a public hartal was observed by Hindus in the town of Cambay and in Tarapur, Sayma, Undel, Shakarpur and Metpur villages.

Villagers were asked to send their representatives to Cambay on the 5th January when a public meeting was held to discuss the grievances of the people and to formulate their demands. Permission for the meeting was granted by the State and it was attended by between 2 and 3 thousand persons. Amongst the resolutions passed was a request for reduction in land revenue assessment by at least 50 per cent, a request for the allocation of surplus revenues to the Local Funds Department for village improvements, and a demand for a free press.

On the 30th January the State issued a Jahernama advising the people not to be swayed by the subversive activities of the Hindu Praja Mandal touring in the villages of Undel, Tarapur and Khada during the fortnight in order to enroll members. He advised the people not to concern themselves in any way with the Hindu Praja Mandal. He said that their activities were misleading the people since the administration of the Cambay State was efficient, the personal expenses of His Highness² were less than ten per cent of his revenue, expenditure incurred by the State in education was comparatively more than that incurred by the Baroda State, land revenue assessment rates were less than those in Baroda State, local fund revenues were spent on school, dispensaries, roads and other village improvements and village panchayats has been established in the State since 1895.

A committee has been appointed by the Nawab under the chairmanship of Rao Saheb Pranvallabhadass H. Banatwala of Jambusar to enquire into the financial state of the cultivators and to recommend measures for relieving their indebtedness.

Gujarat States—Rewa Kantha

Agitation against the Thakores has continued during the fortnight. It is generally confined to Bhils, but Dunkhas and Holis have been affected. The Seva Sangh Committee has sent a circular to all the Thakores asking for their opinions with regard to certain suggested reforms. The main points were that no cultivator should be forced to work by the State, that all those who had been evicted from their land within the last 12 years should be allowed to resume them, that the Thakores' personal expenditure should be reduced and that assessment should also be reduced. The Thakores in the Sankheda Mewas met together during the fortnight and agreed to certain reforms and these will be discussed at a meeting of the Thakores under the Rewa Kantha Agency in the presence of the Political Agent between the 18th and the 20th of January.

Pranlal Munshi, President, Baroda Praja Mandal who had promised the Political Agent to order Kachulal Shah and Mangaldas Arya to curtail their agitation and to leave the Sankheda Mewas temporarily has at last partially fulfilled his promise, and during the last week of the fortnight no public meetings were held, and agitation has slackened. Mangaldas Arya and his family went to village Pala in the Tilakwada Taluka of Baroda State but on the 11th January Mangaldas returned and continued his tours through the villages and collected members and subscriptions. Other agitators, including Jiwanlal Purshottam Sharma, continue to move about, and though they publicly advise people to pay land revenue when it becomes due in the beginning of March, it is reported that they have in secret advised the people not to pay anything. It has not, however, been possible

to confirm this report. Number of people continue to join the Seva Sangh and they are now giving contributions of grain and cotton.

On the 31st December 1938, at Sevada certain cultivators, who had been dispossessed by the Thakore of Vasani Sevada 9 months before, demanded the restoration of their lands from the present owners, and a minor riot took place. After the riot the accused who were ten in number absconded, but they have now been arrested and will be released on bail when they have furnished satisfactory sureties. An enquiry is proceeding to find out whether this riot was caused at the instigation of any of the agitators.

In many small states the people refused to discuss matters with the Thakores unless they do so through Kachulal or Mangaldas. The Thakores on the other hand do not want to have any truck with these agitators partly because they do not wish to lower their own prestige, and partly because they do not trust them and are aware of their previous record. The villagers continue to refuse to work for Thakores, particularly in Uchand, Naswadi, Agar, Sindhiapura, Palasni, Gad Boriad, Chorangla and Vasani Virpur States. Jambughoda and Mandwa States, in which the cultivators for some years have enjoyed many of the rights demanded elsewhere, have not been affected. Vijiria State is only partially affected.

¹ Shri Vijay Singhji, b. 1890, succeeded to the throne of Rajpipla in 1915; educated at the Rajkumar College, Rajkot and Imperial Cadet Corps, Dehradun; traveled extensively in Europe and America.

² Nawab Mirza Hussain Yawar Khan Bahadur, b. 1911; succeeded to throne of Cambay with full powers in 1930; educated at Rajkumar College, Rajkot till 1928, spent a year in Europe with his tutor; assisted by his Dewan, Military Secretary and Sar Nyayadhish in the administration of State.

2. Fortnightly Report, Gujarat States, second half of January 1939

Fortnightly Report, Gujarat States, Rajpipla, Cambay, Rewa Kantha, second half of January 1939, pp. 28-33, File No. 40(15)-P/1939, Political Department, available in History of Freedom Movement Unit, File No. 80/3 R IV & V, Set No. XI

Gujarat States—Rajpipla

Comparative quiet prevailed throughout the State and there was no agitation beyond a few speeches which were mild in tone.

The Lok Sabha had decided to observe the 30th January as 'Responsible Government Day' but little enthusiasm was aroused.

Members of the poorer classes and owners of small holdings have held several meetings during the fortnight and have resolved to put their grievances before His Highness and not through any intermediate agency. There has been a rally amongst these classes in favour of His Highness' Government. Deputations from these meetings waited on His Highness during the last week and were satisfied by the assurances given to them that their welfare was close to His Highness' heart and would always remain so.

Gujarat States—Cambay

The activities of the Praja Mandal during this fortnight were centred mainly on the Charotar division of the State. A meeting was held in Cambay at the house of Mr Chimanlal Purshottamdas at which about 100 persons were present. An association of different trades in the city was formed. The aims and objects of this association are mainly to advise the constituent trades in their internal affairs, to represent their interests to the State or to Government as need be and to cooperate with the Praja Mandal in its political fight. The hotel keepers have remained aloof from this association.

A branch of the Merchants' Association was also started in Tarapur on 12 January 1939 and a Students' Association was formed on 13 January 1939.

At Undel a meeting attended by about 200 persons was held on 4 January 1939 in which it was decided to apply for adequate remission of land revenue as the crop yield during the year was alleged to be 3 annas. A volunteer Corps was also organized.

At Tarapur, on the 17th instant, a large meeting attended by about 1200 persons, including those from surrounding villages, was held under the Presidentship of Mr Chimanlal Purshottamdas. A procession was formed and the President was taken to Tarapur village in a chariot driven by 11 bullocks. The following resolutions were passed in this meeting: (1) adopting the resolutions of the meeting held in Cambay on 5.1.1939 (2) for reduction in the land revenue assessment (3) objecting to the constitution of the committee appointed by the State to enquire into the question of agricultural indebtedness (4) for a scrutiny of the accounts of the Tarapur Water Works and (5) for establishing an Agriculturists' Association.

Next day a meeting was convened in Cambay in which Mr Mathuradas M. Parikh, Vice President of the Praja Mandal, was elected President. Mr Bhadrakumar Yagnik, editor of the *Rajasthan*, who was invited by the Praja Mandal to come to Cambay, was also present and delivered a speech. The following resolutions were passed: (1) inviting the States' attention to the resolutions passed by the meeting of the 5 January 1939 for removing restrictions on freedom of speech and writing, and for the grant of Responsible Government and for their early fulfillment by the State, (2) for further reduction in the rates of supply of electrical energy by the Cambay Electric Supply and Industrial Co., and (3) for inauguration by the State of a policy of total prohibition of sales of liquor and toddy within the State.

A Students' meeting was held in Cambay on the 19 January 1939 in which Mr Bhadrakumar Yagnik and others delivered speeches and showed the students how to cooperate with the Praja Mandal in its struggle for the people.

About 100 persons of Undel assembled on the 19th and passed a resolution against the use of motor buses as the fares were high; they also resolved to hold a meeting at Undel as was done in Tarapur on the 17th instant.

The Sahayak Samiti Committee, composed of citizens of Cambay State residing in Bombay, held a meeting on the 16th of January with Bhulabhai Desai in the chair. It appointed a committee of 15 members to cooperate with the Praja Mandal workers of the Cambay state.

An association styled 'The Cambay Youth League' was established in Bombay on 22 January 1939. Its aims and objects are declared to be: (1) to unite all the youths of Cambay under the banner of this league, (2) to cooperate with the Praja Mandal in its fight for Responsible Government and (3) the advancement of the moral, social, mental and physical well-being of the youths.

Mr Vasalmiya Mangreli, leader of the Muslim Praja Mandal, visited some villages during the fortnight and advised the people (mostly Muslim) not to be misled by the activities of the Praja Mandal.

A meeting of Muslims was held in Cambay on the 22 January 1939 under the Presidentship of Mr Vasalmiya. The following resolutions were passed:

1. affirming the Muslim's loyalty to the State in terms of Resolutions passed in the meeting held on 4th December 1938 and assuring the State that the Muslims did not participate in any activities of the Praja Mandal for Responsible Government and
2. assuring His Highness and the State that the aim and object of the Muslim Praja Mandal were not to obtain Responsible Government or to lead any movement against the State, but that the association desires to remain loyal to advance communal unity and to adequately represent the interests of the Muslims.

Some depositors in the Cambay State Savings Bank withdrew their deposits for no particular reason. It is believed that they did so at the instigation of the Praja Mandal. The withdrawals however have now decreased.

His Highness the Nawab has appointed a Committee of 2 official and 3 non-official members with a non-official President to inquire into the financial condition of agriculturists and their grievances and to submit a recommendation for redemption of their debts.

As some statements in the press were found to be incorrect, the State has begun to issue pamphlets for the information of the public which point out to them the true state of affairs.

Gujarat States—Dharampur

On 20th January 1993 His Highness' the Maharaja of Dharampur declared that the nominated members of the present Municipal Council, created in 1935, will be replaced by elected members.

Gujarat States—Lunawada

On the 23rd instant a few persons went to Lunawada from Godhra for propaganda work in connection with the meeting of the Panchmahals-Rewa Kantha Youth Conference to be held in Godhra shortly. They held meetings on the 23rd and the 24th, and delivered speeches asking the people to unite and organise. They also resolved to start a Youth League in the state. Some of the local youths are trying to enlist members.

Gujarat States—General: Rewa Kantha Agency

The following is the report of the Political Agent, Rewa Kantha, Surgana, and the Dangs:

During the fortnight ending the 31st January the situation in the Sankheda Mewas had continued to improve. The arrest of the Sevada riot case has had a salutary effect. Their friends, who had been amongst those who had been persuaded not to have dealings with the Thakore, eventually approached him and obtained certificates enabling them to stand surety.

Kachulal did not enter the Mewas. He remained in Bahadarpur in Baroda State. He was visited by several villagers from Uchand State and was collecting details regarding rates of assessment to land revenue.

Manfaldas and his lieutenant, whose full name is Jiwantal Motilal Sharma (not Juwantal Purushottam Sharma as reported last fortnight), visited Naswadi, Palasni and Gad Boriad States on the 16th, 17th and 18th January. They travelled at night only and then with a large bodyguard. At Naswadi and Palasni they advised the people to take all their disputes to them and not to the Thakores and they enrolled more members of the Seva Sangh. At Gad Boriad they told their audience that they should not pay land revenue till the assessment had been reduced.

They have not visited the Mewas since the 18th January, the reasons are three-fold. Firstly, Pranlal Munshi is known to have advised them to stay away now that most of the demands have been granted by the Thakores. Secondly, they are said to have taken Rs 8,000 as collection. Their income is now decreasing and there is always the possibility that they will be called to give an account of their stewardship. Thirdly, they are genuinely frightened of the Thakores and have disliked the close scrutiny of their movements by the Agency Police and by the Thakores' servants.

It is felt that the agitation is little more than skin deep at present, if the Thakores would forget the unfortunate traditions which they imbibed at Chief's Colleges, and would mix more with their subjects, they would be in a better position to appreciate the necessity for reforms and would have little difficulty in maintaining their position. Their attitude in this respect has improved of late. The fiasco of Vallabhbbhai Patel's recent visit to Baroda and the improved relations between His Highness of Rajpipla and his subjects will undoubtedly affect the situation favourably. The large

remissions recently granted by Baroda, however, may give some stimulus to the demands for reduced assessments. Collections are not due to begin till the last week in February and it is possible that the reforms announced by the Thakores may prevent any further trouble.

The Thakores of the Sankheda and the Pandu Mewases held meetings at which the Deputy Political Agent and the Political Agent were present on the 18th and 20th January. After some discussions, unanimity was reached on a number of points and the following notifications were agreed to:

1. No tenant will in future be evicted so long as he pays his assessment regularly.
2. No cultivator will be dispossessed of his land in favour of bhayats or other relations of the Thakore.
3. All petty taxes have been abolished except local cess.
4. Occupancy rights have been granted to the cultivators who may sell and mortgage their lands to bona fide cultivators who are subjects of the state.
5. Forced labour has been abolished.
6. Rights have been given to cultivators over many kinds of trees situated in their fields.
7. Nazrana has been abolished and instead all transfers will have to be registered. Registration fees will be small and fixed by notification.

These notifications were published locally in the Press by the 28th January. There has not yet been time to judge the effect they have had. They were given a good press in Baroda. The Political Agent will tour through the Sankheda Mewas from the 4th till the 6th February. Though the bad condition of the roads will restrict his movement, he hopes to be able to visit Uchand, Agar, Sindhiapura, Naswadi, Palasni and Boriad State.

¹ Vijayadevi Mohandevji, b. 1884, succeeded to throne of Dharampur in 1921; belongs to Solar Sisodia Rajputs dynasty; member, Chamber of Princes.

3. Rajpipla State Reforms

Times of India, 14 January 1939; and *Bombay Chronicle*, 13 January 1949

13 January 1949

With the experience of Rajkot before them, some of the Gujarat and Kathiawar States seem to be anxious to meet the demands of their subjects so as to avoid an intensification of popular movements within their territories.

Even the important State of Baroda is reported to be willing to conciliate the people in so far as their demands are reasonable and legitimate. Jamnagar, Dhrangadra and several other States are also credited with a similar intention.

In Rajpipla a settlement of outstanding points of dispute between His Highness and his subjects is believed to have been reached during the current week. Events began to move fast with the twelfth annual session of the Rajpipla Lok Sabha (People's Conference) which was held at the end of December, 1938, under the Presidentship of Mr Vallabhbhai Patel.

In order presumably to forestall the Conference, the Durbar announced some concessions on the eve of the session, but they were regarded as inadequate. The Conference passed a number of resolutions demanding the acceptance of the principle of Responsible Government, complete democratisation of local bodies and the redress of grievances. If the demands were not met, the people declared their determination to resort to direct action, to withhold the payment of local cesses and to violate the law prohibiting the cutting of *mowha* trees.

With a view to avoiding trouble in the State, it is reported, the Maharaja and the Dewan¹ met Mr Vallabhbhai Patel to discuss the people's grievances in a sympathetic manner. An agreement was reached whose provision have just been published in an issue of the State Gazette.

It is announced that hereafter people will be free to cut *mowha* trees without any payment to the State, facilities will be given to the poor to build huts on Government lands at nominal fees, local bodies will be made fully elective and their presidents will be elected, land revenue will be reduced by 12.5 to 25 per cent; and restrictions on the Press will be removed.

The question of Responsible Government still remains to be solved; but it is understood that the Maharaja has consented to receive a deputation of the people's leaders to discuss the question of political advance. It is believed that the Ruler will accept Responsible Government as the goal of his policy and will call an early session of the State Assembly which has been in abeyance for a number of years. These developments have caused great satisfaction among the people of Rajpipla.

Interesting developments are likely to take place in Jaipur at no distant date. The order of the Durabr placing a ban on the State Praja Mandal has naturally irritated the supporters of the Mandal, who are said to be preparing for a straight fight with the Durbar.

Meanwhile, Seth Jamnalal Bajaj, who was prevented by an order of the State Government from entering Jaipur limits, it is stated, is determined to disobey the order and court imprisonment in the near future. Talks with leaders in Bardoli reveal that he has written to the Durbar communicating this intention to defy the order if it were not withdrawn within a fortnight.

¹ Dewan of Rajpipla—Khan Bahadur Pheroze D Kathavala, BA, LL.B.

4. Fortnightly Report, for the first half of January 1939: From the Resident of Baroda and the Gujarat States Agency, 19 January 1939

File No. 40(8)-P(S)39, Microfilm Roll No. 2, Baroda and Gujarat States Agency Papers, 1939, NAI

19 January 1939

Baroda:

Praja Mandal meetings were held in the Baroda, Mehsana and Amreli districts. At these meetings people were exhorted to press for the demands formulated at the Bhadram session. Their number has, however, decreased since the recent remission and suspension of land revenue amounting to about 47 lakhs have rather cut the ground from under the feet of the agitators.

Pranlal Munshi¹ during the course of an interview stated that he had had a conversation with Vallabhbhai Patel, and that there was a possibility that agitation against the state would die down in the near future as it was expected that the demands of the people would be met. Vallabhbhai Patel has, however, accepted an invitation to visit Baroda on January 20th and will hold a meeting that evening. It is also reported that a purse of Rs 10,000 collected from the public will be presented to him. He had expressed a wish to meet the Dewan². The Dewan had at first intimated that he would be willing to see him, but has now decided not to do so and to be away from the state instead. He proposes to go to Bombay. His reason is that he does not wish to give any one an opportunity to say that any subsequent reforms that may be made by the State originated at Patel's instigation in such a meeting.

On the 30th December 1939 a meeting of the Baroda Praja Mandal Executive Committee was held at Nandod in the Rajpipla State under Vallabhbhai Patel's Chairmanship. The Committee

resolved that the sub-committee on revenue reduction should continue its work and submit its report to the Praja Mandal for further instructions. Despite the recent remissions granted by the Baroda Government, this sub-committee is still touring in the Bhadran Peta Mahal.

An instance of violence on the part of the supporters of the Praja Mandal is reported from Malavada—a village in the Petland taluka. The sub-committee was visiting this village on the 3rd of January. Some *Harijans*, who had been made to work the whole day erecting a Pandal for the reception of the sub-committee, left to take their evening meals against the wishes of some of the workers.

On the 9th January Vallabhbhai Patel visited Ena, a village in the Palsana taluka, and delivered a lecture there. About 200 persons attended the meeting.

Pranlal Munshi, President, Baroda Praja Mandal, who had promised the Political Agent to order Kachulal Shah and Mangaldas Arya to curtail their agitation and to leave the Sankheda Mewas temporarily, has at least partially fulfilled his promises, and during the last week or fortnight no public meetings were held, and agitation has slackened.

¹ President, Baroda Praja Mandal

² V.T. Krishnamachariar, Dewan from 1926–44.

5. Baroda Praja Mandal's Resolutions

Bombay Chronicle, 23 January 1939

Baroda
22 January 1939

A resolution protesting against the unprovoked acts of hooliganism indulged in at the meeting of the Baroda State Praja Mandal on January 20 by certain individuals, and criticizing the Baroda State authorities for failing to take proper precautionary measures and further appealing to the responsible leaders of Maharashtrians in the state to quench the fire of communalism in the interests of the ruler and the ruled, was adopted by the Working Committee of the Baroda State Praja Mandal.

The resolution after tracing the developments leading to the disturbance stated that before the arrival of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel several pamphlets couched in unparliamentary language were circulated, calling upon Maharashtrians to break up the public meeting. The resolution further alleges that though these were known to the police authorities they failed to take due precautions: they not only did not attempt to prevent the rowdies from creating mischief but also did not try to check or take into custody the mischief-makers even though they were eye-witnesses of the molestations of the citizens.

'The Working Committee is strongly of opinion', the resolution continues, 'that the police had failed to carry out their duties both at the time of the procession and in the public meeting. The Working Committee believes that these incidents are a slur on the Baroda State and had not the thousands of peasants and young men and women, who had gathered to take part in the proceedings maintained immense patience and self-restraint, the outcome would have been serious and deeply regrettable.'

'The Working Committee therefore congratulates all of them for maintaining exemplary peace and quiet in the meeting and urges them to stick to the non-violent attitude against all provocations on future occasions also. It has been a known fact that all those that had taken part in the disturbances were Maharashtrians. The Working Committee, therefore, earnestly appeals to responsible persons

among the Maharashtrian citizens to make an honest effort to quench the fire of communal hatred that has been incited by the incidents as it believes that in such an action lies the interest of both the ruler and the ruled.'

'The Working Committee strongly urges the Government, therefore, to allay the misgivings caused to a large section of the population by the appointment of an impartial and independent committee presided over by a judge of the High Court to investigate into the causes that led to the present disgraceful incidents and also into the responsibility of the state officials for the same.'

6. Tension in Baroda

Times of India, 23 January 1939

Baroda
22 January 1939

A tense situation prevails in Baroda city since the early hours of yesterday morning, following disturbances on Friday at a mass meeting organised to give a reception and purse to Mr Vallabhbhai Patel, President of the Baroda State Praja Mandal, who was here on a visit.

Stray assaults are reported from several places in the city. So far about fifty persons have been injured, four or five cases being serious. Several affrays and cases of hooliganism are reported, the storm-center being the Praja Mandal office which is, however, guarded by the police.

Yesterday evening about 200 Maharashtrians marched in procession to Alakapuri to attend a meeting to be addressed by Mr Patel and create rowdyism. The place being guarded by the police, their plans were frustrated. They proceeded to the railway culvert near the race-course road and started to molest pedestrians, including women and children. Stones were thrown at motor cars.

Students' Strike

The Gujarati students of most educational institutions, including Baroda College, in the city, observed a strike yesterday and besieged the office of the Praja Mandal, where the committee of the Mandal was in session. Mr Vallabhbhai Patel addressed the students and persuaded them not to create any disturbance, but to disperse quietly. He urged them to be perfectly non-violent against all provocation.

The police have taken the situation in hand and are guarding strategic places in the city and suburbs. The District Magistrate of Baroda has issued a notification prohibiting the carrying of lathis and other weapons under pain of prosecution under the local Police Act.

Seven Slightly Injured

Unpleasant incidents marred Friday's reception of Mr Vallabhbhai Patel when he was taken in procession from the station to a pandal specially erected in the exhibition grounds, where a mass meeting was planned to be held, says a Baroda Government's Press note.

When the procession arrived at Lehipura some black flags were waved by demonstrators, who appeared to be largely Maharashtrians, with a mixture of Harijans, Arya Smajists and a few Muslims, mostly boys, numbering about 200. Then they immediately rushed along the road to the *mandap* constructed on the exhibition grounds, forcibly entered the pandal and began to shout and rush and damage the *mandap*. All this happened before Mr Patel arrived, who, it appears, had gone back on hearing of the disorder.

Owing to the disorder the meeting had to be abandoned. When the mischief started the police were pushed and with great difficulty the crowds could be cleared off the maidan. Stones were thrown and some police officers, including Mr Das, were hit.

The entrance archway of the pandal and the decorations at the Jawahir Hotel were set on fire. There was another incident at Ahmedabad Pole.

Seven Persons injured

The crowd with the procession was about 2,000 and at the *mandap* it swelled to about 15 to 20 thousand people. The situation was brought under control with some difficulty within about an hour's time. Seven persons received slight injuries and five of whom were discharged immediately after treatment. Most of these injuries were received in the fracas near Ahmedabad Pole, between the Kalabhavan students and volunteers of the Praja Mandal; two Maharashtrian students of the Kalabhavan were among the injured.

From Friday morning unsigned printed leaflets were freely distributed in the city enjoining the Maharashtrian community not to take any part in the procession as to leave the *mandap* immediately if any unseemly remarks were made against His Highness the Maharaja Saheb.

More than three hours before the meeting was to have commenced work, Mr Das, the Police Naib Suba, was informed, on inquiry, by the person in charge of the arrangements at the ground, that no police were required inside the pandal.

It is hoped that wiser counsels will prevail and nothing will be done to embitter feelings between Gujaratis and Maharashtrians, which have all along been cordial.

7. Sardar's statement on Baroda Incidents

Bombay Chronicle, 28 January 1939

Bardoli

26 January 1939

Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel has issued the following statement with regard to reports appearing in the Marathi Press, to which his attention has been drawn by Maharashtrian friends:

'I should not have wasted my time over issuing a statement on the happenings in Baroda last week had not my Maharashtrian friends pressed me to contradict certain statements,¹ which are being attributed to me by a number of Maharashtrian papers. Thus it has been said that Baroda has been the scene of terrible 'Goondaism' since my visit to Baroda on Friday last, that the meeting I was going to address was dispersed and another meeting was held the next day, where I delivered an address in 'Purdah', that many people were not admitted to the meeting and that as usual I poured out vials of poison regarding Maharashtrians as the paper think is my custom, that I instigated the people to start a movement for driving out non-Gujaratis from Baroda State, that the land revenue remission of 91 lakhs announced by the State was inadequate and that the people's quarrel was not against the Maharaja but against Maharashtrian officials.'

Unabashed Falsehood

'Let me state categorically that everyone of these statements, excepting one about revenue remission, is unabashed falsehood. The statement about Baroda being the scene of "Goondaism" is true. Only the implication that it was due to my visit is false and no one has taken the trouble to mention that it was all one-sided Maharashtrians "Goondaism"? Before my arrival leaflets in Marathi over the signature of an anonymous Maharashtrian had been distributed denouncing me and

using language about Gujaratis which I dare not reproduce and exhorting Maharashtrians to do their duty to destroy the meeting. This they did successfully by destroying the platform, lights, loud-speaker wires and ultimately setting fire to the gates.

A State Communique, which is incorrect in many particulars, admits this much.'

No Purdah Meeting

'I addressed the meeting the next day in Alakapuri, which was duly announced and which was attended by about 20,000 people. How it is described as a 'Purdah' Meeting passes comprehension. I do not know if anyone intending to attend the meeting was turned out. I know this that leaflets asking Maharashtrians to boycott or break this meeting had been distributed and the police had taken care to see that "Goondaism" did not break up Saturday's meeting. In spite of this some Maharashtrians did come, intend on breaking the meeting with placards announcing their intention and they were stopped by police, who were pelted with a shower of stones and one police officer was badly injured.'

What Sardar Said

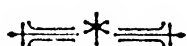
'So much about the meeting. As to what I said at the meeting I would challenge the Maharashtrian paper to get the State authorities to publish a report of my speech taken even by the State CID reporters. I would challenge any one present at the meeting to produce a single statement similar to the one attributed to me. What I did say and would still say was this, that we had no personal quarrel with the Maharaja, that no one should indulge in personal criticism of him, especially when he was in a bad state of health, that our quarrel was with the system of administration, that the people claim Responsible Government and no half-hearted concessions, like the revenue remissions announced, could satisfy them, that they could never be satisfied with a system, under which most offices of responsibility were filled by people coming from outside Baroda State and that they should insist on having filled by people who were residents of the State.'

Sheer 'Goondaism'

Referring to the incidents on the outskirts of town and inside the town after the termination of the meeting, the Sardar says: 'No one with a Gandhi cap or khadi clothes was spared. Khadi caps were snatched off their heads and burnt. Gujarati women were jeered at and molested. The regrettable stabbing of one, who was discovered later to be a Maharashtrian, took place somewhere on the outskirts of the town and was due presumably to the fact that he wore a Gandhi cap and was mistaken for a Gujarati. By defying the police order the Maharashtrian procession was taken through the town and Gujaratis were attacked in their homes. It is no pleasure to me to have to mention these things. I have among my friends in Baroda several Maharashtrians and I still believe that this rowdyism was confined to a few, who obviously knew that they might do whatever they liked with impunity.'

'I will say nothing more about the conduct of the police as Praja Mandal has passed a resolution asking for an independent inquiry into the happenings and the extent of responsibility of police for this disgraceful episode'.

¹ See *CWMG*, Vol. 69, p. 343 and p. 379.



8. Fortnightly Report for the Second Half of January 1939:

From the Resident for Baroda and Gujarat States, 2 February 1939

File No. 40(8)-F(S)/39, Microfilm Roll No.2, Baroda and Gujarat States Agency Papers, 1939, NAI

Baroda

His Highness¹ had a relapse on January 21st and on that day and on January 25th he had blood transfusion. His condition has now improved. It has tentatively been suggested that he might be brought to Baroda in the first week in February.

Mr Vallabhbhai Patel arrived at Baroda at 5 p.m. on January 20th. During his visit disturbances which were communal took place in the city. Many persons received injuries and one Maratha boy named Surve was stabbed. He died subsequently in the hospital.

The move of the Praja Mandal to give a reception to Mr Vallabhbhai Patel was unpopular in the town, not only among the Marathas, the Arya Samajists, Muhammadans and others, but also among large sections of the Gujaratis, including two prominent Gujaratis, Mr Tulsibhai Amin, who was the Chairman of the Reception Committee of the Bhadrin Conference, and Mr B.D. Amin of the Alembic Chemical Works.

On the 21st the situation in the city continued to be tense. Precautions to prevent a clash were taken at the adjourned meeting and the carrying of lathis and dangerous weapons were prohibited. At about 4 o'clock, 200 Maharashtrian students marched from the city to attend the meeting. They were joined by others. To prevent a disturbance, the police did not allow them to enter the meeting and kept them under control by surrounding them with a cordon. Stones were however thrown at them from the surrounding houses and these stones they picked up and threw at the meeting. Some persons received minor injuries.

At the meeting, Mr Vallabhbhai Patel made a long speech in the course of which he said that the disturbances which occurred the day before were not becoming to Baroda and he expressed the hope that a proper enquiry would be made.

Dr Moonje planned to visit Baroda on January 26th, but was persuaded to abandon it in view of the situation in the town following Vallabhbhai Patel's visit.

Gujarat States:

Rajpipla: Comparative quiet prevailed throughout the State and there was no agitation beyond a few speeches which were mild in tone.

The Lok Sabha had decided to observe the 30th January as 'Responsible Government Day' but little enthusiasm was aroused.

Cambay: The activities of the Praja Mandal during this fortnight were centred mainly on the Charotar division of the State. A meeting was held in Cambay at the house of Mr Chimanlal Purshottamdas at which about 100 persons were present. An association of different trades in the city was formed. The aims and objects of this association are mainly to advise the constituent trades in their internal affairs, to represent their interests to the State or to Government as need be and to cooperate with the Praja Mandal in its political fight. The hotel keepers have remained aloof from this association.

A students' meeting was held in Cambay on the 19th January 1939 in which Mr Bhadrakumar Yagnik and others delivered speeches and showed the students how to cooperate with the Praja Mandal in its struggle for the people.

The Sahayak Samiti Committee composed of citizens of Cambay State residing in Bombay held a meeting on the 16th of January with Bhulabhai Desai in the Chair. It appointed a comm. of 15 members to cooperate with the Praja Mandal workers of the Cambay State.

An association styled 'The Cambay Youth League' was established in Bombay on the 22nd January 1939. Its aims and objects are declared to be (1) to unite all the youths of Cambay under the banner of this league, (2) to cooperate with the Praja Mandal in its fight for Responsible Government and (3) the advancement of the moral, social, mental and physical well being of the youths.

Mr Vasalmiya Mangroll leader of the Muslim Praja Mandal visited some villages during the fortnight and advised the people (most Muhammadans) not to be misled by the activities of the Praja Mandal. A meeting of Muhammadans was held in Cambay on the 12th January 1939 under the Presidentship of Mr Vasalmiya:

(i) reaffirming the Muslims loyalty to the State in terms of resolutions passed in the meeting held on the 4th December 1938 and assuring the State that the Muslims did not participate in any activities of the Praja Mandal for Responsible Government and (ii) assuring His Highness and the State that the aims and objects of the Muslim Praja Mandal were not to obtain Responsible Government or to lead any movement against the State, but that the association desired to remain Royal, advance communal unity and to represent the interests of the Muslims adequately.

¹ Sir Sayaji Rao Gaekwad, b. 1863, succeeded to the throne in 1875; invested with full powers in 1881; educated privately; married to a princess belonging to House of Tanjore in 1880; was succeeded by Sir Pratap Singh Gaekwad on 7th February 1939

9. The Baroda Reforms

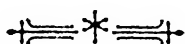
Editorial, *Bombay Chronicle*, 22 February 1939

22 February 1939

We congratulate the young Maharaja of Baroda¹ upon the beginning he has made in granting constitutional reforms² to his subjects. Those reforms, obviously, do not satisfy public demand and they cannot certainly be said to have initiated Responsible Government in Baroda. But the fact that the present orders have been passed within three weeks of his accession to the gadi bespeak highly of the young ruler's public spirit and his solicitude for the welfare of his subjects. The reforms closely follow the recommendations made by the Committee which was appointed a year ago. The Dhara Sabha or Assembly has been enlarged with an elected majority and before it will be placed all legislative proposals and the State budget for consideration. An elected member of the Sabha will be appointed as Minister in charge of the nation-building departments. The vote of the Sabha will not be binding upon the Government, nor will even the elected Minister be responsible to the Assembly. But we view the present instalment merely as a welcome beginning and it is to be hoped that soon Baroda will enjoy a Responsible Government. During the reign of His late Highness, Baroda was in many respects in the vanguard among Indian States and we earnestly enjoin upon the present Ruler to maintain the same noble tradition by introducing complete democracy in his domain at the earliest possible opportunity.

¹ Sir Pratap Singh Gaekwad, b. 1908, succeeded to throne on 7 February 1939; educated at Baroda College, Baroda, and Deccan College, Deccan; married daughter of Sardar Mansinghrao Ghorpade of Kolhapur in 1929.

² On 20 February the Maharaja issued a proclamation announcing reforms in the State—the creation of an enlarged Dhara Sabha, with an elected majority, based on a wide territorial franchise.



10. Fortnightly Report for the First Half of March 1939:
Report on the internal situation in Baroda and
the Gujarat States for the First Half of March 1939

File No. 40(8)-P(S)/39, Microfilm Roll No. 2, Baroda and Gujarat States Agency Papers, 1939, NAI

Baroda:

Baroda City: On the 4th March 1939, a meeting was held in Fatehpura under the auspices of the Baroda Raj Muslim Conference. Mr Rasulkhan H. Pathan presided. Mr Hussain Mansuri, addressing the meeting, asked the Muslims in the State to join the Muslim Conference and to press for the rights of the community in the State. The meeting was attended by about 250 Muslims.

On the 5th March 1939, a meeting was held under the auspices of the Praja Mandal to express sympathy with Mr Gandhi on his Fast¹ and to protest against the attitude of the authorities at Rajkot. Mr V.A. Nikte presided. The meeting was attended by about 400 persons.

On 11th March 1939, Dr B.S. Moonje, the Hindu Mahasabha leader, delivered a lecture under the auspices of the Rashtriya Seva Sangh and explained the objects of the Hindu Mahasabha.

Mr Vallabhnbhai Patel proposes to visit Mehsana district about the end of the month. The Praja Mandal proposes to present him with a purse. The date of the visit is not yet fixed.

¹ Mahatma Gandhi had started his fast on 2 March at Rajkot when the demands submitted to the Rajkot administration had not been considered.

11. Rajpipla Reforms

Times of India, 30 March 1939

30 March 1939

Rajpipla, one of the most picturesque States of the Gujarat States Agency, is the latest to take in hand the question of constitutional reforms.

A committee comprising a non-official majority has been formed by the Maharaja with a view to associate the people more closely with the administration. It was the present Maharaja, incidentally, who introduced the Legislative Council. Special attention is to be paid to the interests of the cultivators who form the backbone of this State and His Highness has invited opinions from all classes of his subjects on the question of granting relief to the ryots.

It is hoped shortly to introduce legislation to eliminate rural indebtedness and initiate other agricultural reforms. Meanwhile another committee has been formed to report on the administration of the Local Fund which has been entrusted to the people from 1st July.

Rajpipla is essentially an agricultural State and is rich in cultivable land, especially in the south-eastern talukas. Cotton forms the most important crop and there are also valuable teak forests. The State is reputed to possess corneelian and agate mines, and legend has it that the famous cup of Ptolemy came from the mines at Limbodra in Rajpipla.

Sangli is yet another State which is busy preparing to reform its constitution. A committee of twelve members has been appointed by the Raja¹ following the reforms announced in the Assembly last December.

Sangli, which is a member of the Deccan States Agency, has a progressive record and the recommendations of the Committee will be awaited with interest.

¹ Chintamanrao Dundirao Alias Appa Saheb Patwardhan, Raja of Sangli, b. 1890; ascended the Gadi in 1903; educated at Rajkumar College, Rajkot; married to daughter of Advocate of Amraoti; member, Standing Committee of Chamber of Princes.

12. Fortnightly Report for the Second Half of July 1939: Report on the internal situation in Baroda and the Gujarat States for the Second Half of July 1939

File No. 40(8)-P(S)/39, Microfilm Roll No. 2, Baroda and Gujarat States Agency Papers, 1939, NAI

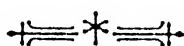
Baroda

Subhas Chandra Bose arrived at Baroda on 20th July accompanied by Indulal Yajnik¹ and D.M. Pangarkar.² He held two meetings in the city. The first, intended for the students, was addressed in English and the audience was exhorted to organise a local branch of the 'all India students' organisation'. At the second meeting for the general public, he spoke in Hindi and condemned the present policy of Congress on the grounds that it was too slow and that the country was prepared for direct action for independence. He criticised the prohibition policy in Bombay and finally urged his hearers to join the 'Forward Block'.

On 2nd July Mr Vallabhbhai Patel, President of the Baroda Raj Praja Mandal, visited Kalol in Baroda State to attend meetings of the Praja Mandal Working Committee and of Prant Panchayat. The meetings were held in Camera. He also addressed a public meeting at which the attendance was about 1000. He found fault with the Baroda Government for abandoning the enquiry in disturbances which occurred during his visit last January.

¹ Indulal Yajnik (1892-1972), a noted journalist, social leader and Kisan Sabha leader, he was born at Nadiad, Kaira district of Gujarat and was educated at Bombay. He started *Navajivan Ane Satya*, a Gujarati monthly in 1915. He also started *Young India*, and joined the Servants of India Society and Home Rule League. He Participated in Kaira Satyagraha and non cooperation movement. He became Secretary, Gujarat Provincial Congress Committee in 1921 and resigned following a dispute with Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. He organized the Gujarat Rajakiya Parishad. He started *Yugadharam* in 1922. He also edited *Hindustan*, a Gujarati daily. From the mid-1930s, Indulal involved himself singularly in the pursuance of the Kisan causes and led All India Kisan Sabha movement as the foremost leader of Gujarat Kisans. He was imprisoned for his anti-war stand and propoganda activity in 1940-41. Later he started *Nutan Gujarat* (1942), Came to the forefront of the Mahila Gujarat movement (1956-60), and became a member of the Lok Sabha, 1957-62, 1962-67, 1967-70 and 1971-72.

² D.M. Pangarkar, a distinguished and popular leader of the Gujarat Provincial Kisan Sabha led throughout the 1930s many glorious struggles of the bonded labourers, share-croppers and small cultivators of the province, especially of those belonging to south Gujarat.



13. Fortnightly Report for the First Half of September 1939:
Report on the internal situation in Baroda and
the Gujarat States for the First Half of September 1939

File No. 40(8)-P(S)/39, Microfilm Roll No. 2, Baroda and Gujarat States Agency Papers, 1939, NAI

Baroda

On 3rd September the Kareli and Baroda city Arya Samaj branches organised a procession of about 300 present to celebrate 'Hyderabad Satyagraha Victory Day'. The procession was taken through the main streets of the city and terminated at the Jubilee Bag where a meeting, attended by about 1000 persons was held under the Presidentship of Pandit Anandpriya. The main theme of speeches was the restrictions placed on the Hindus in the Hyderabad State and the Satyagraha movement carried on in the State by the Arya Samajists from all over India for over 7 months 'in order to secure for the Hindus their religious rights and privileges.'

On the 9th September another Arya Samajist meeting was held in honour of Pandit Chandakaram Sharda and Pandit Chanendraji, the two prominent participants in the Hyderabad Satyagraha movement. The meeting was held under the Presidentship of Prof. Manekrao and was attended by about 800 persons. The speakers described the successive stages of the Satyagraha movement and said that unity among the Hindus was the chief factor that contributed towards the success of the movement.

14. Fortnightly Report for the first half of October 1939:
On the internal situation in Baroda and the Gujarat State

File No. 40(8)-P(S)/39, Microfilm Roll No. 2, Baroda and Gujarat State Agency Papers, 1939, NAI

Baroda

Gandhi Birthday Week was celebrated in Baroda city from 2nd to 9th October, 1939 and was organised by the Baroda City Praja Mandal. A Khadi stall was opened by Nagindas T. Master of Bombay and lectures were given by Congress workers from Ahmedabad etc. on Gandhi's life and teachings. Gandhi Week was also observed in Patna and Palsana (Baroda State) with the sale of Khadi and speeches etc.

CUTCH

1. Yusuf Meherally to Launch Satyagraha

Congress Socialist, 8 January 1939

8 January 1939

Repression has started in Cutch following the decision of the Cutch States Peoples' Conference, under the leadership of its President Comrade Yusuf Meherally, to launch satyagraha if the demand for Responsible Government is not conceded within three months.

Following the arrest of Sjt Velji Thakersi¹, a member of the Executive Council of the Cutch Prajakiya Parishad, Comrade Yusuf Meherally declared:

'For the first time in the history of Cutch, the sedition section, which was only recently added to the archaic Penal Code of the State, has been availed of. Its use suggests that the officials concerned are already beginning to feel nervous in the face of public enthusiasm. I welcome this arrest. I hope that it will be followed by many others. The people are quite ready. Hundreds have already enrolled as satyagrahis. I shall fill the state Jail twice a day.

'Repression is only the beginning of Revolution. The experience of recent events in India bear eloquent testimony that in the face of public determination, repression is of no avail. The jail-birds of yesterday are Ministers in India today. Rajkot is fresh in all minds and Cutch has started marching the Rajkot way. I appeal to the people of Cutch to maintain utmost calm and prepare for the glorious struggle ahead.'

¹ Velji Thakersi, member of AISPC Working Committee.

2. Cutch Must Crumble

Article by H.B. Sompal, *Congress Socialist*, 8 January 1939

8 January 1939

One fortress after another is crumbling as the popular army in the Indian States marches along. The sound of the bugle is now heard from Cutch.

The Sixth Session of the Cutch States Peoples' Conference was held at Mundra from 26th to 28th December 1939 under the distinguished Presidentship of Comrade Yusuf Meherally. Men from all corners of the State gathered. Nearly 15,000 people came to hear the call of their President—an unprecedented event in the history of Cutch. The lead given by the President was in tune with the response.

The ancient method of passing a number of resolutions at a conference followed by absolute inertia until the next conference was given the go bye. At the instance of the President, the Conference passed a single resolution demanding complete Responsible Government within three months—empowering at the same time the Working Committee to take suitable direct action and launch a satyagraha campaign in the event of the demand remaining unsatisfied by 31 March 1939.

Days of mere words are no more. Revolution is everywhere in the air. Action and more action is the burden of the song. Enthusiasm abounds. Men and money are pouring in. Hundreds, including women, have already enlisted in the satyagraha army. A lac and more Kowries were collected in no time.

Till recently the people in the States were watching eagerly the fight in British India. They were told, and they believed, that their Victory would be won on the battle-field of British India. Theirs was to watch and wait. Now the roles are reversed. Rajkot has proved that the people in the States are just as brave and capable as their brothers in Bardoli.

Repression is expected. The sooner it comes the better. Already Velji Thakersi, a member of the States Peoples Working Committee, has been given the privilege of being the first to sacrifice at the altar of the freedom of the people. The sections of the Penal Code are growing with the added amendments (a) (b) (c) will grow in geometrical progress on the spirit of the people.

Comrade Meherally's stay in Cutch has been prolonged. Sjt Velji's arrest has taught Cutch what a hartal is like. It seems the Maharao's¹ administration feel that the three months' time given to it by the people is too long!

¹ Maha Rao Sri Khengariji Savai Bahadur, GCSI, GCIF., resides at Bhuj, the capital of the State; belongs to the Rajput family of Jadiyas; the Rajput nobles called Bhayat, forming the brotherhood of the Rao, help in the administration of the State.

3. Yusuf Meherally's Meeting with Maharaja of Cutch

Bombay Sentinel, 17 January 1939

17 January 1939

The long awaited interview between His Highness the Maharaja of Cutch and Mr Yusuf Meherally, President of Cutch Prajakiya Parishad, came off this evening at Sharadbag.

It is understood that Mr Meherally handed over to HH a document embodying the general outline of the scheme for Responsible Government of Cutch. HH, it is understood, told Mr Meherally that he would need some time to study the draft.

After coming out of the meeting Dr Jadavji, interviewed by press representatives, said that the spokesmen of the Parishad had submitted a memorandum demanding Responsible Government in the State. HH naturally would need time to consider the statement, he said.

Mr Meherally said to press representatives that His Highness asked to be informed as to what was contemplated by the Mundra Resolution for Responsible Government. So in consultation with the members of the executive of the Parishad he prepared brief memorandum giving a broad outline of scheme which was ultimately presented to His Highness.

Continuing, he said that the Ruler had asked for some time to consider the matter. Asked if he expected anything to come out of this meeting Mr Meherally stated that the whole question was in the melting pot and he would not like to prejudge the result. Pressed to say something definite about the intentions of the Parishad, Mr Meherally said that their position was clear from the very beginning. He said that the Parishad was equally ready for peace or war. It was arrived at on basis of Responsible Government. Nobody would welcome it more cordially than he and his colleagues, and should the contrary were to happen, the people, he added, were fully determined to face the fiery orders.

4. Cutch People's Preparations for Satyagraha

Bombay Sentinel, 19 January 1939

Bhuj

18 January 1939

It is understood that Cutch State authorities will take entirely new steps to tire down Parishad workers, in case the Parishad starts satyagraha or picketing. The State will not use repressive methods, but will patiently watch the various moves of the Parishad.

Mr Velji Thakersi, who was arrested on sedition charge, is being kept in Bhuj Jail as an ordinary prisoner. The Parishad workers are going ahead with their various activities. Meetings are being held daily. Great preparations are being made to launch satyagraha. Workers are touring all over the State. Volunteers from different centers have been instructed to come to Bhuj in procession.

Tremendous welcome was accorded to the first batch of satyagraha volunteers from Bombay on their arrival here from Mandvi this evening. They were taken out in a huge procession through the main streets of the city.

5. Meherally in Villages

Bombay Chronicle, 25 January 1939

Naliya (Cutch)
22 January 1939

After the conclusion of the 'Khedut' conference and having made final arrangements for picketing liquor shops, Mr Yusuf Meherally, President of the Cutch Prajakiya Parishad, started on a tour of the interior. This time he selected Abdasa Taluka which is one of the most backward Talukas in the State.

Leaving Bhuj at noon, the presidential party reached Surthi village at night where a hearty welcome was accorded. A public meeting was held under the Presidentship of the Village Patel, Mr Velji Nagshi, and was attended by a large number of people including Mohammedans.

Mr Meherally said that there was great awakening among the masses in the State. Responsible Government was the only remedy for all the ills of the people. He exhorted them to carry out the Parishad programme with zeal.

6. Women Picket Pleadings' House

Bombay Chronicle, 27 January 1939

Bhuj
26 January 1939

Thousands collected at Azad Chowk, formed the huge procession which marched, led by Veer Sena women volunteers, through important streets and terminated in a meeting outside Mahadev Naka. Mr Yusuf Meherally presided. Nineteen speakers including the Nagarseth spoke. They exhorted people to push the fight ahead till Responsible Government was won. Mr Meherally read out the Independence Pledge adopted at Mundra session of the Parishad. Three Bombay Sevikas also spoke in the meeting.

Mr Meherally warned the State that if the question of Responsible Government was delayed any further, people were ready to start direct action. He appealed to the people to prepare for 31st March, which was the date fixed for starting satyagraha.

Telegraphic reports from all over Cutch indicate Responsible Government Day was observed throughout Cutch.

News from Nalia indicate that some 'goondas' seized the National Flag and assaulted Parishad workers.

Rigorous picketing was resorted to at houses of number of pleaders. Bombay Desh Sevikas and Kesaria Saris stood shoulder to shoulder with local women volunteers. Not a single pleader attended the court.

7. Satyagraha in Cutch State

Bombay Sentinel, 27 March 1939

27 January 1939

A largely attended meeting of the residents of Cutch State living in Bombay was held at Danabunder on Wednesday under the Presidentship of Mr K.M. Bhujpuria, to hear a message from Dr B.N. Antani, in connection with the Satyagraha movement which will be launched in Cutch State from the 1st April.

Dr Antani, who is an ex-President of Cutch Prajakiya Parishad, vehemently criticised the present Maharao and his advisers. He said that there was a state of anarchy at present in Cutch. He made an appeal to all present to join in the Satyagraha movement.

Mr Vidyakant declared that the existence of the native States, as they were governed today, was an anachronism in the body politic of India. This even Paramount Power had realised. Viceroy had advised them to reform themselves. The speaker advised the audience to take advantage of this psychological moment and to fight out their battle. He narrated the tragic poverty of the local population in Cutch State and attributed the cause to decades of misgovernment on behalf of the State and their advisers.

8. Kamaladevi's Tribute to Cutch People's Spirit

Bombay Chronicle, 28 March 1939

27 March 1939

Mrs Kamaladevi said: 'I had come to Cutch with a vague feeling of uncertainty, for we had always understood this country to be very backward. But today after my short tour here, I go away full of confidence, reassured that the country is prepared for freedom's battle.'

'The awakening amongst the masses is remarkable. It is particularly striking amongst the women. Their enthusiasm is heartening, their determination unshakable. Cutch may have been late in falling in to line, but it has caught up with remarkable speed.'

'I have travelled through these dreary lands, driven over road-less tracks and seen terrible poverty, dry parched villages, shrivelled up cattle. But everywhere I have seen new fire in the eyes of the people, new light of hope brightening up their shrunken hollow cheeks. Fervour for freedom has wrought transformation in their lives.'

In Comrade Meherally and his brave colleagues Cutch has found a fine band of workers, who are patiently harnessing this new energy to the great wheel of revolution. I carry many sweet and happy memories of Cutch, whom nature has treated so cruelly, but where people have tried to compensate by flooding this arid land with an infinite variety of colour and beautiful design. But above all I shall remember the innate culture, gentle, polite ways of men and women, even of young boys and girls. It is like a cool balm to one's spirit after rough hurtful impress of unkind Nature.

Surely, the people who have triumphed over Nature's strong hand will triumph over the weak hand of autocracy and replace the present "One-man-rule" by a democratic regime. I am confident that the spirit which grim Nature could not kill, no amount of human suppression can destroy. India expects Cutch to weave a new social order as beautiful as her creative arts and crafts.'

During her three days' stay Mrs Kamaladevi visited all the four important cities of Cutch, viz., Bhuj, Mandvi, Anjar and Mundra, besides a number of villages. Wherever she went tremendous welcome awaited her.

Leaving the Women's Conference halfway on the second day, she motored to Mandvi, where a huge procession was taken out in her honour. Passing through important streets of the city, it terminated at the Azad Chowk, where a public meeting attended by thousands of people was held. All along the route hundreds of men, women and children lined up on both sides of the road and profusely garlanded her.

Passing the night at Mandvi, she started yesterday morning for Mundra. On the way meeting and procession were arranged at Bhujpur. On arrival at Mundra, the people who were waiting in the burning sun since morning, gave her a rousing reception and took her round the city in a procession. A public meeting was held in the 'Volunteers' Camp. A special significance of the meeting was that more than half the number present were women.

From Mundra on her way to Anjar, she visited the 2400 years old Jain Temples at Bhadreshar and further up she had to encounter a reverse cyclone with heavy down-pour of rain. This unexpected rain spoiled her programme in Anjar. Thousands had collected outside the Ganga Naka to give her an enthusiastic welcome. Though it rained heavily, as soon as Mrs Kamaladevi's car was stopped, the people filled the sky with cries of 'Kamaladevi-ke-jai', 'Inquilab Zindabad' etc. Though the streets were flooded, she was taken in procession through the city. A public meeting was held at the Dashasha Mail Vandi. Such was the enthusiasm amongst the people that the whole Vandi was full.

Addressing the meetings Mrs Kamaladevi said that a new colour had been lent to India's fight for freedom since the last year, when the struggle for Responsible Government started in the Indian States. She said that this fight in the States was part and parcel of India's struggle which was for the emancipation of the poor who were at present starving.

Regarding the struggle in Cutch, she said: 'From what I have seen for last two or three days I can assure you that, if you combine and work together harmoniously, victory is yours.'

9. Kamaladevi's Message to the People of Cutch

Bombay Chronicle, 28 March 1939

Bhuj
27 March 1939

On the eve of her departure from Cutch, Mrs Kamaladevi gave the following message to the people of Cutch:

'I am grateful to you all for your kindliness and very warm welcome extended to me. But I am sure that you have showered on me all this graciousness as symbol of your tribute to the battle for freedom.'

'India is on the threshold of freedom. Her last step is the leap the States have to take. Once they cover this short pace, the last stage of the journey shall be over. I am sure that you, therefore, are aware of your immense responsibility and will shoulder it with determination. Freedom is a hard task master who can only be conquered by grim determination, endless industry, infinite patience and limitless suffering.'

'One and all must join in this struggle if victory is to be yours. You can only make it possible by joining the Parishad in large numbers, Hindus, Muslims, and all, for freedom is for all. You have a brave general in your President, Mr Meherally. If you follow him and the Parishad work with non-violence and discipline, Cutch will soon be free'.

10. All India Cutch Youth Conference

Bombay Chronicle, 31 March 1939

Cutch Mandvi
29 March 1939

Lady Thakersey, President of the Cutch Women's Conference, left today with Sunderbal, Hansraj Pragji and others for Bombay. They were given a hearty send-off at the docks by a large number of people, including Mr Barbheram Popat, President of the Youth Conference.

A batch of five volunteers under the captainship of Mr Liladhar Brahmanbhatt arrived this morning from Karachi.

They were received on board the steamer, and afterwards taken in a procession through the city to the volunteers' camp.

This session of the All Cutch Youth Conference concluded at 1.30 a.m. today amidst wild scenes of enthusiasm.

Till late hours at night people sat spellbound under the star-shining sky and heard each speaker patiently.

After a few hours' recess, the Conference met at 9.30 am to complete the work. A loud applause greeted Mr Ismail Hirani who came to the rostrum to support the resolutions against Federation.

All the six resolutions proposed by the Subjects Committee were unanimously adopted without any amendment, and a number of local workers made forceful speeches.

Mr Vajubhai Shukla was the last speaker to address the conference. He appealed to all to prepare for war and join the Parishad. Mr Vajubhai assured full support to Rajkot youths to people's struggle in Cutch.

The session concluded with singing 'Bande Mataram' by Monghben Kantanwalla and other 'Desh Sevikas' of Bombay and the huge crowd slowly dispersed with a new spirit and inspiration.

11. Future of Satyagraha in Cutch

Bombay Chronicle, 31 March 1939

Bhuj
30 March 1939

Mahatmaji's Statement¹ asking for the suspension of Civil Disobedience in all states has created a great sensation and uneasiness in Cutch.

The Parishad has made tremendous preparations for launching Satyagraha on 1st April, and the stage was finally set for the fight. It is stated that 500 persons were to start Civil Disobedience on the opening day, and batches of peasants were believed to be ready at various centers to plunge into the struggle. Preparations for commencing the no-tax campaign were also said to be complete.

Emissary to Mahatma

In view of these preparations, Mahatmaji's Statement came as a bombshell, and immediately, the Parishad workers met for hurried consultations. It was decided to send Mr Mulraj Karsondas, General Secretary of the Parishad, to Mahatmaji to explain to him the situation and ask him to make an exception in favour of Cutch in view of the special circumstances.

Differences of Opinion

Mr Mulraj returned yesterday evening and was closeted immediately on his arrival with the President, Mr Meherally, and other members of the Executive Committee till a late hour.

Discussions today are going on with important workers, but nothing is yet definitely known. It seems that a strong difference of opinion prevails in the Parishad circles. The Executive Committee meets this evening when a final decision will be taken.

It is understood that Gandhiji has advised the suspension of the Struggle for the time being, in spite of the special circumstances in Cutch.

¹ See *CWMG*, Vol. 69, pp. 78-79, 102-103.

12. Cutch Satyagraha Suspended

Bombay Chronicle, 1 April 1939

Cutch Bihar
31 March 1939

Satyagraha which was to be launched in Cutch from tomorrow has been suspended for the time being in pursuance of Gandhiji's advice.

A resolution to this effect was adopted unanimously at a special meeting of the Executive of the Cutch Prajakiya Parishad last night.

It is believed that the meeting, which lasted six hours, reviewed the whole situation in a tense atmosphere.

13. Call Comes to Cutch

Article by Kamaladevi, *Congress Socialist*, 2 April 1939

2 April 1939

Cutch under its treaty with the Paramount Power has been considered foreign territory. To most of us it has seemed so. We have heard much more of the far-off Hawaiian Islands all these years than of Cutch. Therefore when one morning the papers flashed across the front page that Cutch was also contemplating a political fight, the reactions were complex. Some hardly took notice, others did but scoffed, but a larger section grew interested, particularly those who originally hailed from Cutch.

One of the peculiarities about Cutch is the fact that more than half its population is now settled outside its territory. Cutch people are noted for their enterprise as well as phenomenal success in business. So six lakhs have left their home country leaving a meagre five lakhs to sparsely fill that great big peninsula. The small number in fact accentuate the dreariness of the place.

If one sees Cutch and understands its people, he does not wonder at their desertion. Nature has been very unkind. It is mostly desert country or sandy shore line. What nature has spared could have been turned to gardens and granaries but with some effort. But Cutch has not been blest by very active rulers. The Maharao himself has a curious aversion to change. Inaction is his motto, immobility his creed. It seems to almost amount to a dread. Not only has he himself not taken any initiative but he prevents others from any such venture as would introduce a change in the face or the life of the country. Many a son of Cutch on whom fortune has smiled have tried in vain to improve their home country but they have met with stern refusal. This perverse conduct

becomes all the blacker when we see the old Maharao making constant trips to far-off gay lands and bring back many a new object of comfort and within the sanctuary of his own palace enjoy the ease of modern civilization—and all at the bitter cost of his long-suffering subjects. Recently he had an electric lift installed in his palace. To meet this additional demand for electric power, he had had to cut his capital city off! So we find the streets dim with kerosene, while the house holders manage for themselves with other devices.

King Midases

Cruel nature has stimulated man into adventure and enterprise. The Cutchis are a bold hardy people with a keen genius for business. They are the King Midases at whose touch everything glows with luster. They have contrived to fight the oppressive dreariness of their land with almost a streak of magical wonder. The starvation of their souls and minds has broken forth to infinite colour and beauty. Their clothes, their pots and pans, their houses, their country carts, their toys, in fact every object from house construction to a ladle and knife, is carved in beauty. They have with almost a super-human effort created a fairy land in a desert. It is too stunning an effect and has to be seen to be believed. One travels through miles of dreary waste, over roadless tracts, winding in and out of grim rocks, rattling and bumping through parched fields and you suddenly land into a lovely picture, splashed with colour and design exquisite. Time seems to have long forgotten Cutch in its mad onward race. India too did. Its children in their hunger for life, for action, for adventure, left its dim shores for brighter lands. It got pushed more and more into the weary shadows of a forgotten age. And then suddenly one day Cutch became the front page sensation. The people had given an ultimatum to their Ruler that unless they got Responsible Government in 3 months, they were going to fight.

Many were skeptical. Nobody had seriously associated Cutchis with deep political aspiration and much less with an organised movement. It seemed incredible. They refused to take it as anything but a newspaper canard. But to-day there are not many skeptics left. They who had come to scoff have remained to pray. Many a Cutchi who had long forgotten his native land, is reverently winding his way home again, to do his bit for the motherland.

Leap Over Centuries

Cutch has leaped over centuries in the last few months. Comrade Meherally has always been something of the wonder man who juggles round with his magic tricks. He has with the help of his other comrades transformed Cutch Praja beyond recognition. The people have been started out of their age-long slumber. Today you find them astir with a new life. The most striking feature is the awakening amongst the women. The upper class women are still stricken by *purdah*. And where seclusion is a class symbol, it mars the social life. But this new breath has brought hope of liberation to them. They have turned their faces towards this new destiny with rare courage. They understand little of politics, but enslaved for centuries, they have a vague yearning to get free from their ancient shackles. They rend the skies with Inquilab Zindabad. Rarely have I seen women give this mighty cry with such lusty fervour. Recently they have assembled in a Conference—the first of its kind in Cutch. Yet they came, strong in their hundreds. They had trudged over miles of burning earth, with little bundles on their heads—came quivering with a strange hunger, a wistful yearning for something, which seemed to them too big for words, they just looked it as all brave souls, and spoke their strength and feeling through their eyes.

Unquenched Thirst

The call of the battle has sounded in the remotest villages. The hills resound with *Inquilab Zindabad*. The message of the Prajakiya Parishad has found an abiding place in every heart. To say that Cutch is backward would be to express poorly an enormous tragedy. It is a country which eternally thirsts for it has no water. It has no proper communications. Barely half a dozen of the big towns are linked by bus, which has to rattle over trackless ground. Even this service is as recent as two years. Under British pressure, one railway line 75 miles in length has been constructed. There is only one train with an engine. It makes just one trip a day—and so it has no lights, no danger signals. Far from trade or commerce being encouraged, it is discouraged, and where possible sabotaged. Many of the old ports have disappeared. The few that remain get no facilities. Contact with an outer world, the Maharao fights like the very plague.

There is no education worth the name. Out of the eight Taluka headquarters, five have schools. There is only one girls schools at Bhuj, the capital. One can't expect much in a country where the grand sum of fifteen thousand is allotted for education out of a revenue of 45 lakhs.

The services are mainly very poorly paid. So it is the recognised order of the day to live on scraps which may fall. This is inevitable. Moreover there is no fixed scale. It is very erratic. The Chief Medical Officer draws Rs 1500—and his immediate subordinate barely a couple of hundreds. If the Chief Commissioner gets Rs 1500—the one next to him gets only Rs 40. The whole system is crudely vulgar.

The Zamindars

No printing press or paper is allowed. Until recently a permit had to be secured even for a type writer. The land is mostly in the hands of Zamindars, about 130 of them holding their lands as gift from the British. None of them pay any revenue to the State. And they are masters who are under no obligation to the Ruler. The population varies very greatly from Taluka to Taluka, from 91,000 to just 2,000, showing the complete absence of any development and the absolute dependence on the vagaries of nature. The average earning of a family of 5 members would be about 25 cories, which works out to less than a rupee per head per mensem!

There is no doubt that the Cutchis will give a good account when called upon to do so. They are just waking up to a new life, growing aware of new worlds, new ideals, new thoughts. All the pent up energy has been released. The flood is filling Cutch and carrying it from end to end. What Cutch needs is not enthusiasm, faith or the spirit of self-sacrifice. There is more than enough. What she needs is workers—her people in other lands, laden with experience, rich in knowledge. Her many sons and daughters, scattered far and wide, flung in far-off climes, have a great and sacred duty to their home land. They should hasten home-wards and throw themselves into the freedom struggle.

14. Cutch Pleader's Conference

Bombay Chronicle, 18 April 1939

18 April 1939

The third session of the Cutch Pleaders' Conference opened here today in Brahampuri Lawyers from all over Cutch were present. The proceedings began with the singing of 'Bande Mataram' after which Mr Tulusidas Seth, a leading lawyer and General Secretary of the Prajkiya Parishad opened the Conference. He said the year 1939 was memorable in the history of the Indian States' people and that throughout the length and breadth of India all States are showing a new political

consciousness and were asserting themselves through satyagraha to realise their demands for Responsible Government. States' people have been completely demoralized by despotism of the Rulers and in order to free the people from despotism the duty of the legal profession is always to stand and fight for political rights of the public. He hoped that pleaders of Cutch would not lag behind and offer complete co-operation to the Parishad.

He said lawyers must outgrow narrow and orthodox legalism and always be prepared for taking the lead in social progress.

The Reception Chairman, Mr Keshavji Motichand, in his address dealt with the present chaotic condition of Law in Cutch, and stressed the necessity of having a special legislative body to enact laws suitable to modern conditions in Cutch.

The Secretary, Mr Kantilal, having read the messages of goodwill, the President, Mr Koonverji Hariram read his address. He stressed the importance the legal profession occupies in the eyes of the public and dwelt upon their various duties to the clients. He deplored that owing to there being no regularly codified legal system, there was want of uniformity, completeness, efficiency and regularity in the judicial system. Pleadors as also the public had to suffer a good deal of inconveniences on this account. He further said that this want of uniformity and completeness in the legal system led each judge to give judgment according to his own whims. He appealed to the lawyers always to co-operate with the public and Prajakiya Parishad for reforming laws and the judicial administration. He appealed to the State to see to the judicial administration be improved at once. He wanted appointments in higher judicial services to be made from amongst the members of the Cutch Bar.

He strongly criticised the action of the State in suspending the Sanads of two leading lawyers and ex-secretaries of the Bar Association for taking part in the Parishad activities, which were completely legal and constitutional, without even giving them an opportunity of being heard. He concluded by laying special emphasis upon the unity among members of the Bar and appealed to all members to stand united for their rights, dignity and status.

15. Goondaism in Cutch Village

Bombay Chronicle, 27 April 1939

Cutch appears to be marching the way of Rajkot, Limbdi and Jamnagar as is evident from the report received today from Mankuva, a Jagirdari village 8 miles from Bhuj.

It is reported that a batch of Parishad volunteers, captained by one Hiralal Sanghavi of Bombay, who were touring villages on foot doing Parishad propaganda, reached Mankuva last evening and arranged a public meeting at night. Girasias residing in the village coming to know of this, it is said, determined to break the meeting. Accordingly armed with lathis and other weapons they marched to the meeting place in procession. A Girasdar of the village, who has recently returned from Rajkot after taking a leading part in the demonstration against Gandhiji, it is reported, led these Girasias. They arrived some time earlier at the meeting place and asked the volunteers not to hold the meeting. As no heed was paid to them, they broke furniture and lamps and attacked the volunteers with lathis etc. injuring four of them rather seriously. The National Flag was snatched away, and Gandhi caps, it is said, were burnt during the scuffle after removing them forcibly from the heads of volunteers.

The village folk who are mostly Kunbi peasants came to know of this scuffle and rushed to the meeting place under the leadership of Mr Shivgan, the Village Patel, to the rescue of the volunteers. Seeing them coming, it is said the Girasias fled away, with not a single one of them standing there

to face the villagers. Mr Shivgan with the help of others then removed the injured volunteers to his place and arranged for their treatment.

This news reached the Parishad office this morning and immediately Mr Gulabshanker Dolakia, President, local committee, with two other prominent Parishad members and Girish Mehta have gone to the scene. Further details are anxiously awaited.

16. Meherally's Appeal to Cutch People

Bombay Chronicle, 26 May 1939

25 May 1939

Today was a red-letter day in the history of Cutch ending in a striking victory for the Praja Parishad. The feeling was of excitement all the day and it appeared that the period of suspension would come to an abrupt close and struggle started afresh for vindication of Civil Liberties. The village of Mankuva was the test case. Here Parishad volunteers had been assaulted. National Flag and Gandhi caps had been burnt and this was followed by an order banning the holding of public meetings. The Parishad had resolved to hold the meeting at all costs and face repression in four square fashion.

Since that afternoon, batches of peasants kept pouring into Mankuva. By the evening several thousands had assembled. Exactly at 6.30 p.m. Mr Yusuf Meherally, President of Cutchi Prajakiya Parishad, arrived at Mankuva and was given a tremendous welcome. He was taken in procession to the place of meeting.

A little before Mr Meherally's arrival, a large party of police had arrived on the scene. Meanwhile the leader of the Girasias with large number of his companions armed with lathies and swords had surrounded the meeting place and captured the platform.

Police Request

The situation appeared very ugly and the head of the police force came to Mr Meherally and asked him to shift the meeting to some other place. Mr Meherally refused this point blank and expressed the determination to hold the meeting as advertised. Mr Meherally walked up to the platform and warned the Girasia leader. The latter refused to allow the meeting to proceed but after a while suggested that he would modify his objection if the venue of the meeting was changed. Mr Meherally was adamant and said that he would hold the meeting there whatever the consequences and refused to submit to any threat or violence.

The situation became very tense. Meanwhile the Girasias had brought their motorcar right into the middle of the meeting place threatening confusion. The whole audience was on the tiptoe of expatiation. The tug-of-war continued for about 20 minutes and the clear and determined attitude of Parishad workers created a surprising change in the attitude of the Girasias. After some consultation, the leader of the Girasias announced that they would allow the meeting to proceed.

Ovation for President

Mr Meherally received a great ovation. He said that he had come to that village in an atmosphere of sharp controversy. It was not his intention to humiliate the Girasia Chief or to make him look ridiculous. But he had been compelled to take up the stiff attitude, for the Parishad could not allow its volunteers being beaten up and the National Flag being insulted. Nor could it with self-respect tolerate its meetings being banned by the State. Suspension of the struggle did not mean submitting to every affront. When it came to an infringement of civil liberties they would not take things lying down.

Girasias Position

Turning to the Girasias, the speaker said that they were being misled by the interested parties. Their condition was no better than that of an ordinary farmer and many of them were reduced to starvation. The Parishad was the friend of all and he asked them to place their grievances and difficulties before it.

Mr Meherally then dealt at some length with the economic grievances of the people and contrasted the miserable plight of Cutch in the matters of education, radical relief, water supply, bribery rampant among officials, absence of roads and communications, the vicious system of forced labour with conditions in other provinces. He concluded with a fervent appeal to the people to march with the changing times and not be left behind in the race for progress.

Appeal to Unite

Mr Gulabshanker Amritlal, President of the Parishad local committee, in an eloquent speech appealed to the people to sink their differences and march forward together. He referred to the present meeting which had proceeded in such a happy spirit after such a stormy beginning as a case in point.

The meeting dispersed amidst great enthusiasm late at night, the whole audience accompanying the President to his car.

17. Cutch Shows the Way

Congress Socialist, 28 May 1939

28 May 1939

The suspension of direct struggle was construed as a sign of the people's weakness by entrenched autocracy in the Indian States. Cutch was no exception to the general rule. The period during which Com. Meherally was absent from the State was marked by inhuman assaults on Parishad workers. The Girasias, that ghostly remnant of feudal landlordism—pauperized themselves in most cases, but proud of their predatory prestige and heritage,—had been worked up to a frenzy. Their violent interferences with the peaceful activities of the Parishad had developed into a grave menace. The State itself had not remained idle. Its failure to assure safety to person and unmolested enjoyment by the people of free speech and association, roused the gravest suspicions about its own complicity in the whole disgraceful and shameless events.

When Com. Meherally went back the atmosphere was gloomy indeed. Uninitiated in the mysteries of mystic experiment, the people were getting restless. The hopes entertained by them at the prospect of early struggle for liberation from age-long oppression were slowly giving way to a feeling of resignation. The Rajkot 'experiment' was slowly working its way. It was bringing a deadening effect on the courageous spirit of the people. They wanted marching orders; but they were told to hold back. The reaction to such a turn in what was to be a forward drive, had indeed been disastrous to the States People's Movement as a whole. If it had led to desertions from the State Congress in Travancore where the people are far more advanced than in medieval Cutch, is it difficult to imagine its damaging effect in the newly awakened people of Cutch?

He Speaks Out

It was in such a situation that Com. Meherally found himself when he returned to the field which he had chosen for action. Men of lesser faith in the potential strength of the people and their capacity to struggle and sacrifice might have been caught up in the pervading gloom. But the

leader of the Cutch people is moulded of better mettle. 'Defeat' is not written in his dictionary. He took stock of the situation; assessed it and realised the danger spots. Swift and decisive steps alone could check deterioration. Determined action alone could save the situation. Once this became clear, there was no hesitation. 'Suspension of the struggle did not mean submitting to every affront', he declared.

'Where there is a will there is a way'—so says the old adage. The Parishad organised a mass meeting at Mankuva, a village in the State. It was a test case, a trial of strength for the Parishad. 'Here volunteers had been assaulted. The National Flag and Gandhi caps had been burnt. Meeting had been banned'. Long before the meeting began peasants from different parts had begun to pour in large numbers. Com. Meherally arrived at the scheduled time. The atmosphere was tense. But 'a little before Com. Meherally's arrival, a large party of police had arrived on the scene. The leader of the Girasias with a large number of his companions armed with lathis and swords had surrounded the meeting place and captured the platform. The situation, indeed, looked ugly.'

People's Victory

It was obvious that the Girasias were determined to break up the meeting. It was natural to expect that the police would clear the intruders and protect the people against armed bullies. But what did the police do? The head of the police force asked Com. Meherally to shift the meeting to some other place. He naturally resented the unwarranted suggestion. Despite the threatening situation, he walked up to the platform which the Girasias had already captured. He warned the leader of the intruders who swore back in return. They would not budge: they would break up the meeting. But Com. Meherally is not the man to be intimidated, he declared that the meeting would be held, come what may. The Girasias leader saw that his game was up. He was prepared to compromise. 'Would Meherally hold the meeting in another place? In that case there would be no interference.' Com. Meherally replied: 'The meeting is announced to be held here and it will be held.'

This determined stand on the part of the people's leader thrilled the audience. The people were prepared to vindicate their right. The former depression and tenseness were overcome. A new life vibrated through the whole atmosphere. There was no turning back now. The Girasias saw the change. They retreated. The people's will prevailed. The Parishad came out victorious in the test, in the trial of strength against forces of reaction. The people of Cutch have thus shown the way for the struggling people in Indian States to traverse. What force can foil the determined and organised strength of the people?

18. Mr Gandhi and Cutch

Yusuf Meherally on Gandhi's article in *Harijan*, *Times of India*, 19 June 1939

19 June 1939

'I have read Mr Gandhi's editorial note on the Civil Disobedience in Indian States, and his reference to Cutch has surprised all of us in Cutch not a little,' says Mr Yusuf Meherally, President of the Cutch Prajakiya Parishad, in the statement to the press.

'I am glad to avail myself of this opportunity to state once again that Civil Disobedience in Cutch, due to start on April 1, was suspended by the Working Committee of the Cutch Prajakiya Parishad and not by Mr Gandhi, but without the least doubt that decision was taken in pursuance of his advice. He has once also written to His Highness the Maharaj of Cutch saying that Civil Disobedience has been suspended under his advice. Under the circumstances, I trust there is no room for doubt about what actually transpired. I hope to meet Mr Gandhi shortly and convince

him that he has been misled and that no responsible Cutch worker has uttered sentiments which provoked him to write the note.'

19. Cutch People's Movement

Bombay Chronicle, 13 July 1939

12 July 1939

With a view to end the present impasse and make preparations for the future meeting, the local committee of the Cutch Prajakiya Parishad (CPP) has decided to recommend to the Working Committee the convening of a special session of the Parishad in the immediate future.

Mr Gulabshanker Amritlal presided and Mr Yusuf Meherally, President, CPP, was present. The Committee reviewed at great length the sequence of events during the last seven months and particularly since April 1 when satyagraha was suspended according to Mahatma Gandhi's advice.

It is also understood that events in other states, specially those of Kathiawar, and their bearing on Cutch affairs were considered. The Committee considered the difficulties that had been placed by reactionary elements in the path of the activities of the people's organisations in various states, notably Kathiawar. It was felt that the people of Cutch had faced repression from officials with great fortitude. The people had given a good account of themselves to carry out the Parishad order with cheerfulness. The Committee members from various parts of Cutch, who had come for the meeting narrated their experiences. Mr Meherally made several suggestions to overcome the existing difficulties and further strengthen the Parishad organisation in different parts of Cutch.

V. SIND

Khairpur and Sukkur

1. Khairpur State¹ People's Grievances:

Udhasingh A. Ramachandani to S. Ijazali², 15 September 1939

AICC Papers, File No. 22, Pt. I/1937-42, pp. 577-78, NMML

15 September 1939

Honoured Sir,

I most respectfully beg to submit as under:

'(1) It will not be out of place to make a mention of the fact that in the days of European Ministers in Khairpur State there arose no occasion for any body to form any association, but by the change of times now when State subject found their lives, respect, and property in danger which has been rendered unsafe by the improper and inadequate share of appointments to Hindus in Khairpur State, the formation of association etc. has been found necessary. Instead of public of Khairpur State being pitted and petted the Black Act viz. the Registration Act of 1939 has been enforced on 1st instant to suppress their freedom of expression of feelings for the injustice done to them. The State people expressed their utter dissatisfaction over the drafting of the contents of the Registration Act—which has been promulgated without inviting the public opinion.

Since the British have shown their sympathy towards Poland in this war, it is therefore requested that Mahatma Gandhi will move the sympathy of HE the Viceroy of India and the Honourable the Resident for Khairpur State to get this Black Act modified at once so that social meetings to

Panchayats of towns and villages may be allowed as usual and associations only be registered without restriction. Otherwise it curbs the freedom of expression of feelings of his loyal State subjects of Khairpur State, and also in British territory as well and to appoint a young European civilian like J. Booth Esq. as a Minister to cope with the responsible duty in Khairpur State, and to remove distinction of castes and creeds in filling up positions by qualified Hindus instead of unqualified Mohammedans in State service, especially on expiry of extension period given to Khan Bahadur S. Ijazali, the present British retired Mohammedan officer.

(2) On having expressed sympathy lately by Mahatma Gandhi—towards Britain, France, and Poland in the war, Hindu public of Khairpur State desired to hold as usual meetings of panchayats in every village and town to offer prayers to God for their success in the war, and to collect funds for rendering help but the introduction of Registration Act by the present Minister Khairpur State banged the door shut for such a move which has worked to the disadvantage of the British Government and created bitterness of feelings amongst the public.

(3) As desired by Your Honour the permission of the District magistrate Khairpur State was sought for organising and—enrolling members of Khairpur State people Conference to—legitimately place the public grievances before the authorities so as to facilitate and minimize the labour of the authorities, but it is to the utter disappointment that even such a bonafide move was refused in his letter No. 5169 dated 13 May 1939. It is therefore requested that your honour will be pleased to accord the necessary permission on the same terms and objects as allowed in other states and when the same is fully organized. The necessary permission for its registration will be applied for.

(4) There has been misunderstanding between me and Mr Inayatullah inhabitant of UP who has been promoted from School master to Sub-Inspector of CID Police Khairpur State. Before passing any autocratic order Khan Bahadur S. Ijazali, Minister, and Nazim Police Khairpur State are requested enquire fully into every report being made by Mr Inayatullah Sub-Inspector Police against me...

Khairpur State was in Upper Sind between 26° 10" and 27°-46" North latitude and 68°-20" and 70°-14" East longitude. It is bounded on the east by Jodhpur and on North, West and South by Sind. The rulers are Muslim Talpur Balochs and belong to the Shia Sect. The present ruler is Mir Fazl Mahomed Khan Talpur, born in 1913 and ascended the Gadi in 1936. He was educated at Mayo College Ajmer.

‘Khan Bahadur S. Ijazali, OBE, Retired Collector, United Provinces, Wazir of Khairpur State

2. Grievances of Khairpur Hindus

Resolutions on the Khairpur State passed at the 9th Sind Hindu Conference held at Sukkur, *Sind Observer*, 19 November 1939

15 November 1939

The Khairpur State figured prominently and the policy of the present Vazir, Khan Bahadur Ijazali, came in for a good deal of criticism and condemnation at the ninth Sind Hindu Conference held at Sukkur presided over by Dr Moonje. The delegates who had assembled at the Conference were deeply moved when they heard how Hindu subjects of Khairpur were persecuted in Khairpur State.

The following resolution was moved by Mr Basantram, President of Sukkur Municipality, and was carried:

‘This Conference condemns the communal policy in the Khairpur State pursued by the present Vazir, and regret that the Government of India has failed in its duty of safeguarding the interests of

the minority community in the State. It demands a constitution in which due representation would be given to the Hindus and that the fundamental rights of the Hindus would be guaranteed.

This Conference understands the present communal policy in the State administration is calculated to gradually and systematically wipe the Hindus out of existence and deny them the rights of citizenship, and therefore calls upon the Government of India and the Hon'ble the Resident of the Punjab States to repeal the Registration of Association Act 1 of 1939 and the Minister's Notification 2889 of 1937.'

'It further strongly objects to the imposition of obstructionism in their commercial and industrial growth by refusing to grant licences.

This Conference requests the Khairpur authorities to reserve at least 40 per cent of the services for the Hindus in all grades of various departments, particularly in the judicial, revenue and police departments, and with a view to maintain the above ratio, this Conference recommends that in future at least 70 per cent of the vacancies be filled with Hindus till the above ratio is reached. It also deplores the methods of making appointments by which merit is generally placed at a discount, and suggests the appointment of a Public Services Committee with proper representation to the Hindus, for filling up vacancies. It also suggests that the system of compulsory retirement of servants after the age of 55 or after 25 years of service be enforced.

This Conference is of opinion that the advisory committee must also have one Hindu member and Khan Bahadur Ijazali should be recalled.'

3. Report of Sukkur—Riots

All India Hindu Mahasabha Papers, F. No. C-24, NMML

Not dated

To understand the story of the wholesale murders, arson, kidnappings and other outrages perpetrated by fanatical and lawless Muslims of Sind upon their peaceful and law-abiding fellow citizens of the Hindu community, from the 19th November 1939 onwards, it is necessary to know something about the Manzilgah of Sukkur, and the dispute about it (which was the immediate cause of the Muslim atrocities).

In Sukkur, on the bank of the river Indus, there is an open area bounded by a compound called by the name of Manzilgah or camping ground, since Mogul times. Within this compound there are two small domed structures one of which is now claimed to be a mosque but which have been used as anything but a mosque for at least a century. Ever since the British occupation of Sind this Manzilgah has been used as a place for camps of officers, for carnivals and shows, for bonfires and illuminations on the occasion of Hindu Desaraha festivals, and for miscellaneous purposes like Sind Political, Social and Temperance Conferences. The domed structures have been used as office rooms, liquor distilleries, and dumping places for baggage and furniture. The inscriptions on these domed buildings show that these rooms and the Manzilgah area were places of recreation in the Mogul times. There is nothing to show that there was ever a mosque there. If the place was used as a prayer house at any time, there is nothing to show or tell that it was so. Indeed all that could render a house unclean for the purpose of a mosque in Islamic practice has been done for decades in this Manzilgah.

The interesting point about the Manzilgah is that it is situated exactly opposite to the famous Hindu island temple on Sadhbella which stands on a rock in the midstream.

It would be natural to pick up a quarrel with the Hindu monks and devotees across the river by accusing them of disturbing the Muslim worshippers in the Mosque with their music and art.

The rest could safely be left to the Muslim officials in the Revenue, Judicial and Police Departments. After all, it was Muslim rule in Sind, and Muslim Ministers could be safely trusted to shut their eyes to the Muslim usurpation of public areas and Hindu temples.

In 1933 some Muslims had tried to make out a case for treating the Manzilgah structures as mosques, but their spurious claim was negatived, and a British civilian got the rooms closed and trespassers kept out. That was years ago. In 1937 unfortunately several things conspired to stimulate the Muslims to make another demand, and get what they wanted by legal means or by force.

The Muslim League in Sind (who hated the Allahbux Ministry and wanted to pull it down) saw in the Manzilgah a capital instrument for furthering their designs against the Ministry. The mass of Muslims in Sind are uneducated and are readily influenced by the fanatical preachers. It was given out to them that the Ministry were truckling by the Hindu infidels and keeping the Muslims from their rightful possession of an ancient mosque. Violent speeches were made and a nefarious propaganda carried on in the news papers. The opponents of the present Govt., Sheikh Abdul Majid, K.B. Khuhro, Mr Gazdar, Mr G.M. Syed, i.e. all those to whose interest it was to pull down the Ministry, sponsored the agitation.

It is so easy for unscrupulous politicians to create riots and escape themselves unscathed.

It would have been easy for the Government to expose the hollowness of this agitation, and if there was any mischief brooding or breeding, to nip it in the bud. Most unfortunately, the Ministry adopted a policy which could only be called shilly-shallying. It would not decide the dispute, or stop the agitators, but kept on procrastinating. The Hindus got alarmed and sent representation after representation. They were ready to abide by the award of an impartial tribunal outside Sindh, whether the Manzilgah building was a mosque. The Ministry would make no reply even though the Premier came down to see things for himself. A rumour spread among the Muslims that the Premier was convinced of the justness of the Muslim demand, but that he was being cowed down by the Hindu members of the Assembly. Then it became question of a *Jihad* or religious contest for the Muslim to get possession of the so-called mosque, the disputed building, and the Muslims occupied forcibly the buildings on 1 October 1939.

The Government was in full possession of the facts and knew of the bellicose preparations made by the Muslim fanatics. But beyond promulgating an Ordinance to protect the Ministers from the wrath of the Muslim mob, and giving warnings which were of no use, it did nothing. When the Muslims illegally and forcibly took possession of the Manzilgah on October 1st, the District Magistrate of Sukkur was said to content himself with taking photographs of the scene and developed the negatives in the quietness of his residence. The law-breaking Muslims, who had been marched to prison, were given the freedom of the place and the Manzilgah became a camping ground for Muslims gathered for a *Jihad* or a religious war.

The Hindus were now thoroughly alarmed for their safety. The brutal murder of Bhagat Kanwar Ram, respected all over Sind for his holiness and gentleness, in the beginning of November and the threats of murder of Sadhbella Mahant showed them that if they wanted to live in Sind at all they should organise themselves. So a Hindu Conference was held at Sukkur on 12th November, with Dr Moonje in the Chair, and Resolutions were passed asking the Government to give them protection from the lawless element in the Muslim community.

Then the Ministry did a curious thing. On the 19th November the District Magistrate under orders from them got the Manzilgah vacated by exercise of force, but no precautions were taken to protect the Hindus from the vengeance and fury of the Muslim crowd. Marching to the city it began its work of murder and incendiarism and this butchery continued for days and spread to the mofussil. Here are some details:

Besides these 45 murders in the town, about 120 Hindus, including several babies and ladies, were murdered in the mofussil—property worth about half a crore of rupees was burnt and looted and 6 girls were kidnapped by Mohammedan ruffians and treated shamelessly. One pregnant lady was killed, her belly cut and her child taken out and burnt. Several babies were put in fire and burnt.

The reign of terror spread to the villages and it was much worse there than in Sukkur. About 40 villages were affected, Gosarji most of all. In this wretched place no less than 30 Hindus were killed, some Hindu women being kidnapped, 2 of them married. (These women have been recovered since, and the tales of their experiences are blood-curdling and soul-harrowing). The Muslim goondas not content with killing all the Hindu males they could lay hands upon, let loose brutal lust on the women in a way which recalls the days of Nadir Shah. One baby was burnt in the presence of its mother, one Hindu woman's breasts were cut off, another's arm plucked out, a pregnant woman was hacked to pieces. A familiar feature of the Muslim atrocity was the burning alive or cutting of the limbs of shivering Hindus. In Sind Canal, first the legs of a Hindu were put in fire and then other limbs, until he was roasted alive. Photographs of some of these atrocities were available. The deeds of shame done upon women and children are such as would stagger belief.

The censorship exercised upon all the newspapers and other agencies had kept the people of Sind and of India from knowing the true state of things. In a great many cases the mouths of the sufferers have been sealed by death or by unspeakable shame and yet ample evidence can be obtained of the atrocities committed by the Muslim goondas. The Hospitals at Sukkur and Shikarpur were full; 6,000 refugees from villages wandering for shelter in Shikarpur and 3,000 in Sukkur. It is difficult to give an estimate of the sufferers and the damages to property. But at a rough estimate the Muslim goondas could not have killed less than 150 in Sukkur and its villages and several wounded while property worth more than half a crore has been stolen, burnt or destroyed.

For 10 days there were dacoities, incendiarism, and murders in Sukkur and the adjoining villages; some distant places also caught the contagion. It was the arrival of the Military that put an end to anarchy and murders. The Curfew Order remained in force. After the troops had been stationed, the Ministers and others turned up at Sukkur, and after full 14 days' hartal in Sukkur, on or about 4th December they were able to coax the Sukkur shopkeeper's to open their shops and Sukkur people to go about their business. That also after telegram was received from 2 deported leaders Sjt Virumal and Bhojraj. But the panic has not yet subsided, as Muslims threatened to have their game again if possible, villages continue to be depopulated, and even the Premier¹ had advised the Hindus not to go back to their small villages, but make their homes in larger villages. The Governor of Sind² too had promised Hindus to take care of them, but all that he did was to keep the Muslim Leaguers from surrounding the houses of the Ministers.

The condition of poor Hindus is appalling. If prompt measures are not taken to give relief to suffering Hindus, several more lives will be lost, and corruption and vice reign unchecked. It is necessary to attend to the survivors and their needs as it was the case for rushing help to those that had suffered in the Quetta Earthquake tragedy in 1935.

¹ Premier of Sind, K.S. Allah Baksh Khudadad Khan Gabol.

² Governor. Sir Lancelot Graham.

VI KATHIAWAR: RAJKOT

1. Gandhi on Struggle in Rajkot

Harijan, 4 February 1939, *CWMG*, Vol. 68, pp. 346–48

Bardoli

30 January 1939

The struggle in Rajkot has a personal touch about it for me. It was the place where I received all my education up to the matriculation examination and where my father¹ was Dewan for many years. My wife feels so much about the sufferings of the people that though she is as old as I am and much less able than myself to brave such hardships as may be attendant upon jail life, she feels she must go to Rajkot. And before this is in print she might have gone there.²

But I want to take a detached view of the struggle. Sardar's statement,³ reproduced elsewhere, is a legal document in the sense that it has not a superfluous word in it and contains nothing that cannot be supported by unimpeachable evidence most of which is based on written records which are attached to it as appendices.

It furnishes evidence of a cold-blooded breach of a solemn covenant entered into between the Rajkot ruler⁴ and his people. And the breach has been committed at the instance and bidding of the British Resident who is directly linked with the Viceroy.

To the covenant a British Dewan⁵ was party. His boast was that he represented British authority. He had expected to rule the Ruler. He was therefore no fool to fall into the Sardar's trap. Therefore, the covenant was not an exertion from an imbecile ruler. The British Resident detested the Congress and the Sardar for the crime of saving the Thakore Saheb from bankruptcy and, probably, loss of his Gadi. The Congress influence he could not break. And so before the Thakore Saheb could possibly redeem his promise to his people, he made him break it. If the news the Sardar is receiving from Rajkot is to be believed, the Resident is showing the red claws of the British lion and says effect to the people: 'Your ruler is my creature. I have put him on the gadi and I can depose him. He knew well enough that he had acted against my wishes. I have therefore undone his action in coming to terms with his people. For your dealings with the Congress and the Sardar I shall teach you a lesson that you will not forget for a generation.'

Having made the Ruler virtual prisoner, he has begun a reign of terrorism in Rajkot. Here is what the latest telegram received by the Sardar says:

Becharbhai Jasani and other volunteers arrested. Twenty six volunteers taken at night to a distant place in the agency limits and brutally beaten. Volunteers in villages are similarly treated. Agency police controlling State Agency and searching private houses in civil limits.

The British Resident

The British Resident is repeating the performances of the British officials in British India' during the civil disobedience days.

I know that if the people of Rajkot can stand all this madness without themselves becoming mad, and meekly but resolutely and bravely suffer the inhumanities heaped upon them, they will come out victorious and, what is more, they will set free the Thakore Saheb. They will prove that they are the real rulers of Rajkot under the paramountcy of the Congress. If, however, they go mad and think of impotent retaliation and resort to acts of violence, their state will be worse than before and the paramountcy of the Congress will be of no effect. The Congress paramountcy avails only those who accept the banner of non-violence, even as the paramountcy of Britain avails on only those who subscribe to the doctrine of 'might is right.'

What then is the duty of the Congress when the people of Rajkot have to face not the Ruler and his tiny police but the disciplined hordes of the British Empire?

The first and natural step is for the Congress ministry to make themselves responsible for the safety and honour of the people of Rajkot. It is true that the Government of India Act has given the ministers no power over the States. But they are governors of a mighty province in which Rajkot is but a speck. As such they have rights and duties outside the Government of India Act. And these are much the most important. Supposing that Rajkot became the place of refuge for all the goondas that India could produce, supposing further that from there they carried on operations throughout India, the ministers would clearly have the right and it would be their duty to ask the Paramount Power through the British Representative in Bombay to set things right in Rajkot. And it will be the duty of the Paramount Power to do so to lose the ministers. Every minister in his province is affected by everything that happens in territories within his geographical limit though outside his legal jurisdiction, especially if that thing hurts his sense of decency. Responsible Government in those parts may not be the ministers' concern, but if there is plague in those parts or butchery going on, it is very much their concern; or else their rule is a sham and a delusion. Thus the ministers in Orissa may not sit comfortably in their chairs, if they do not succeed in sending 26,000 refugees of Talcher to their home with an absolute assurance of safety and freedom of speech and social and political intercourse. It is insufferable that the Congress, which today in alliance with the British Government, should be treated as an enemy and an outsider in the States which are vassals of the British.

The wanton breach, instigated by the British Resident in Rajkot, of the Charter of the liberty of its people is a wrong which must be set right at the earliest possible moment. It is like a poison corroding the whole body. Will HE the Viceroy realise the significance of Rajkot and remove the poison?

¹ Karamchand Uttamchand Gandhi was Prime Minister of Porbandar and of Rajkot.

² Kasturba Gandhi was arrested at Rajkot on 3 February on entering the State to offer satyagraha.

³ Sardar Patel issued a statement on 25 January on the cold blooded breach of a solemn covenant. See *CWMG*, Vol. 68, pp. 469–71.

⁴ Thakore Saheb Dharamendrasinghji, b. 1910, succeeded to the throne; educated at Rajkumar College, Rajkot; later on in England, High Gate School, London; belongs to Jadeja Rajput Clan; enjoys plenary powers in administration of State.

⁵ Patuck Robert Cadell, b. 1871; educ: Edinburgh Academy, Haileybury; Balliol College, Oxford; joined ICS; Chairman, Bombay Port Trust; Acting Member Executive Council, Bombay 1924; Commissioner, Sind, 1925–26; retired, 1927; President of the Council Junagarh State, 1932–35; President of the Council Sangli State, 1937; Rajkot State Dewan from 1938.

2. On Rajkot: Gandhi's Statement to the Press

CWMG, Vol. 68, pp. 360–61

Bardoli

31 January 1939

Appeals are being made to me not to precipitate matters in the States. These appeals are unnecessary. After three months of non-violent struggle by the people of Rajkot an honourable understanding was arrived at between the Thakore Saheb-in-Council and Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel¹ representing the people, and the struggle was closed amid general rejoicings. But the noble work done by the Thakore Saheb and the people has been undone by the British Resident.

Honour demanded that the people should fight unto death for the restoration of the covenant between the Thakore Saheb and his people. The struggle now is not between the Ruler and his people, but in reality it is between the Congress and the British government represented by the Resident, who is reported to be resorting to organised goondaism. He is trying thereby to break the spirit of innocent men and women, who rightly resent the breach of faith.

It is a misrepresentation to suggest that Rajkot has been made a test case. There is no planned action with reference to Kathiawar States. What is happening is that those who feel that they are ready for suffering come to the Sardar for advice and he guides them. Rajkot seemed ready and the fight commenced there. Jaipur's case is incredibly simple and different from that of Rajkot. If my information is correct, the British Prime Minister¹ there is determined to prevent even the movement for popularizing the ideal for Responsible Government. Civil disobedience in Jaipur is being, therefore, offered not for Responsible Government but for the removal of the bans on the Praja Mandal and its President Seth Jamnalal Bajaj.

In my opinion it is the duty of the Viceroy to ask the Resident in Rajkot to restore the pact and to ask the British Prime Minister of Jaipur to lift the bans. Such action by the Viceroy can in no sense be interpreted to mean unwarranted interference in the affairs of States.

¹ The Settlement about establishing Responsible Government was reached on 26 December 1938 between Sardar Patel and Thakore Saheb. See *CWMG*, Vol. 68, pp. 274

² Bearmont St John

3. Rajkot Observes Hartal

Times of India, 1 February 1939

Rajkot
31 January

A complete hartal is being observed today consequent on certain allegations by the Parishad workers as to the ill-treatment of political prisoners in jail premises.

The Thakore Saheb left Bagsra yesterday to attend religious ceremonies as the guest of Mr Vipawalla, who also went on Sunday.

Mr Gibson, the Resident, who has gone to Bhuj at the invitation of the Maharao of Cutch, will return here tonight.

Babubhai Dave, Babubhai Chandarana, Jaisukhlal Shah, Ratilal Ranna, Ratilal Raval and Rupshi Tida were sentenced today to six months rigorous imprisonment and fines of Rs 200 each (in default, one month's additional imprisonment), Odhavji Aya was sentenced to one year's rigorous imprisonment and a fine of Rs 500 (in default, one month's additional imprisonment), Govindbhai, of Govindashram, and Saubhgyachand Jhaveri were sentenced to two years and one year rigorous imprisonment respectively and fines of Rs 1,000 each (in default, one month's additional imprisonment).

Mr Jayantilal Desai, the 17th 'dictator', and Mr Jethalal Joshi, the 18th 'dictator', were arrested yesterday and Mr Manubhai Daya was declared the 19th 'dictator'. On Sunday representatives of vernacular papers were served with notices prohibiting them from entering the State area for two months.

Miss Muriel Lester, a former member of Parliament, and Miss Hegg, for two days, left yesterday for Bardoli.

A notification signed by the Police Commissioner announces that at the proposed public meetings banned by the State the public have been collecting in large numbers in the adjoining

roads, blocking the passage of law-abiding people. In these circumstances it is the duty of the police to preserve peace and maintain order by all lawful means, including the use of force, lathi charges, and even firearms. A warning is also given to parents of boys and girls taking part in disturbances.

4. On Rajkot: G.D. Birla to Pyarelal, 1 February 1939

G.D. Birla, *Bapu: A Unique Association*, Vol. 3, 1977, pp. 228–29

1 February 1939

My dear Pyarelal,

I have read the article which has been sent to the *Harijan* about Chudgar's interview with Beauchamp. After reading it, I don't find anything seriously irritating. Recently, after reading Bapu's articles about the Indian States, I have felt as if they were written in a very irritated mood. Two sentences I distinctly disliked. One was where he said that 'military was making merry at the expense of innocent men and women'. The other was about 'organised goondaism'. There may be reason for writing in such strong terms, but in the first case no concrete instance was given, and on the whole I felt that it was not the language that Bapu generally uses.

I was therefore rather frightened when Mahadevbhai told me that Bapu was going to publish Beauchamp's correspondence. But after reading it, I don't think it is in any way stronger than the previous article.

It is very difficult to explain the position from here. But I don't agree with Bapu, if he thinks that Gibson and Beauchamp are acting directly under the instructions of the Viceroy. It is perfect truth when I say that Beauchamp has been reprimanded very strongly by the Viceroy for his indiscreet behaviour and I don't know if he has said anything to Gibson. But the Viceroy did not know the part that Gibson was playing until he saw everything in the press.

The Viceroy is not unsympathetic about advancement in the states but he finds himself a victim of the circumstances. The Princes are united and the Political Department officials have acted in a provocative manner whom the Viceroy can check only up to an extent and he discovered all these things when the mischief was done. And the Viceroy now finds, and complains for this, that Bapu is not helping him. I have strongly pressed on him the necessity of establishing contact with Bapu and he is thinking about it. Here again he fears what would the Princes say? He fears a strong resentment among the Princes in case he takes any action. And he was never reputed to be a man of imaginations though a man of honest habits and sympathetic and fair ideas. The value of all these complications must be correctly assessed to find out a solution. I feel that if there was personal contact Bapu would be able to find out some solution.

Mahadevbhai will reach here tomorrow evening and if I see any possibility of doing some constructive work, I will stay on further, otherwise I will leave day-after-tomorrow for Calcutta.

But the chief thing that is frightening me most is Bapu's health. I never took your letters very seriously and only a few days back Mahadevbhai wrote to me that Bapu was all right. But it appears after all you were right and he was wrong. This is rather a disturbing factor. Please keep me well informed and press on Bapu the necessity of taking entire rest. But would he do this when there is trouble in Rajkot and Jaipur? About Jaipur, I am still hoping some good result. The Dewan is going to be changed unless something unforeseen happens. And the Viceroy himself is going there in the beginning of March.

But about Rajkot I am more diffident. The Political Department here takes up a very formal attitude. 'What can we do? How could we interpret the agreement in one way or the other? And

even if the agreement is broken, how could we force the Thakur to restore it? Supposing Gibson did something stupid. He might be reprimanded and asked not to repeat such mistakes in future. But could we compel the Thakur to restore the pact?’

These things don't help, and as we know, the Political Department, when it wants to do something, it can. But they can always do something bad and when it comes to doing something good, the obstruction comes from the Princes, from the minor officials of the Political Department and the Viceroy, even though he may be sympathetic, finds himself helpless because he can always be reprimanded from higher above, if he coerced the Princes. Thus, it is suggested, the position of Viceroy is very precarious. I am still hoping Bapu would be able to manage the affairs successfully as he has done in the past.

Yours,
Ghanshyamdas

5. Rajkot

Indian Social Reformer, 11 March 1939

Not dated

The Rajkot Fast

When two persons are engaged in a dispute, if one of them pulls out a dagger and threatens to kill the other man if he does not accept the former's view, it will be duress. If the threatened man agreed with his adversary, the agreement will not be morally or legally binding on him. If the man with the dagger threatened to kill not his adversary but himself if the latter did not accept his view, it will still in equity be an act of coercion not morally binding on the other party. The latter can, of course, refuse to yield his point and let his opponent commit suicide, in which case no blame can attach to him. In other words, an acceptance obtained by threat of killing another or one's self has no value as a logical conclusion to the dispute.

The case of the fast, which Gandhiji started on Friday 3rd March at Rajkot, is one of this kind. The fast was said to have been intended to bring about a change of heart of the Thakore of Rajkot who, it was alleged, went back on his promise to Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel regarding the nomination of members to a Committee. The Thakore Saheb disclaims the interpretation put on his undertaking by the Sardar. Gandhiji's fast is a protest against the Thakore's disclaimer. It is the Thakore's plea that it would have been practically an act of abdication of his responsibilities as ruler to have agreed to terms as interpreted by the Sardar and Gandhiji. If nevertheless the Thakore did agree to them, the only rational explanation can be that he either did not understand them or had for the moment become oblivious of his position of responsibility as the ruler....

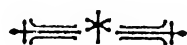
The fast, Gandhiji stated, was undertaken to bring about a change of heart in the Thakore whose father held Gandhiji in reverence as his Guru and whom Gandhiji regards as his own son. But Congress leaders and Ministers have joined in a chorus of appeal to the Viceroy as representative of the Paramount Power to compel the Thakore to accept the terms proposed by Gandhiji (which are far more rigorous than those of the agreement as interpreted by Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel) and enable Gandhiji to break his fast. The Paramount Power has never claimed the right to require the rulers of Indian States to carry out an agreement which they may enter into with private individuals, and that too, in accordance with the interpretation put upon the terms concerned, which it does not accept as correct. The case of Rajkot, it is urged, is a special one but it is not evident how it differs from the other States. Since the assumption of the sovereignty of India by the British Crown,

the Paramount Power has abstained in spite of urgent representations from intervention. The Government of India have had special laws passed to protect the Princes from criticism, in the teeth of strong opposition in and outside Legislature.

The urgent pressure sought to be put on the Viceroy to coerce the Rajkot ruler in a more or less personal matter, is strange as coming from a party which denounces British Imperialism in season and out of season, because it involves the Paramount Power arrogating to itself a right which it has hitherto disclaimed over the rulers of Indian States. The Viceroy can interfere as the Crown Representative to put a stop to misgovernment in Rajkot. That is clearly within his power and is distinctly his duty. There should first be an enquiry by a Commissioner unless the Thakore waives his right to have one and prefers to abdicate. As the Thakore has a son and heir living,¹ he will no doubt succeed to the gadi and the Paramount Power may and no doubt, will help him with its advice in redeeming the state from the effects of the regime of his father. If the Thakore abdicates, his agreement with the Sardar ceases to have force and there is a clean slate to write on. Gandhiji will have no excuse to continue his fast as the Thakore Saheb, the son of his friend, will be out of the picture and he is not bound to his successor by the same ties of personal responsibility. The history of Rajkot itself shows that good Government is possible without the forms of Responsible Government on the British Model. The father of the present Thakore was by general admission a great and good administrator. All that is needed is to improve the surroundings of the occupant of the gadi so as to rid it of the deleterious influences which have gathered round it on the demise of the late Thakore Saheb.

As to the fast as a means of effecting a change of heart in another who has done wrong, there is room for much skepticism. If a man can not be convinced by argument that he has done wrong, he is not likely to be converted by his friend starting a fast. At the most he may pretend to agree for fear that his friend may die of starvation. Gandhiji says that he has always found fasting efficacious and cites a few instances from his personal life. Two of these relate to matters of a private character of which outsiders have no knowledge. But his public fasts for Hindu-Muslim Unity and the omission of the Classification of Harijans as a separate community in the Communal Award, have not achieved their end. Hindus and Muslims are as disunited today as at the time of the famous fast. The Communal Award was no doubt modified but Harijans being registered separately remains. It was surely no change of heart which dictated the modification by Mr Ramsay Macdonald. Gautama Buddha tried fasting as a means of enlightenment and miserably failed. He was grateful to the village matron, Sujata, who offered him milk and rice taking him to be a Sylvan god. He explained to her that he was only a man seeking the truth and promised, if he ever found it, to remember her who had rescued him from the jaws of death and thus enabled him to continue his search. The *Bhagavad-Gita* also condemns self-torture as demonical and declared that... those who seek to serve their fellowmen first emancipate themselves from worldly vanity. Now a days when everybody is starting a fast when he or she does not get her own way, the experience of Buddha and the precept of the Gita are of inestimable value.

¹ Pradumnasinghji, b. 1913, succeeded to the Gadi in 1940; educated at Panchgani and later Rajkumar College, Rajkot.



6. The Rajkot Front

Editorial, *Bombay Chronicle*, 3 February 1939

3 February 1939

Having violated his solemn agreement with Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, presumably under pressure from those who have longer experience of such violations, the Thakore of Rajkot has inaugurated a veritable reign of terror in his State. Open lathi charges, secret physical torture, and various other third degree methods are being resorted to by the local police, apparently without any check by the Government on such barbarities. A boy named Kantilal is alleged to have been given an electric current in the attempt to force him to say where the Parishad Patrikas were published. It is reported that at a meeting at Bedipura parties of women were stampeded by horses of mounted sowars and that about thirty persons were injured including a girl of ten, who was dragged by a horse for several yards. It is also reported that in the village of Halenda a farmer woman was stripped naked and severely beaten. And not the least inhuman part of the tragedy is that even Red Cross doctors and ambulance workers have been refused permission to render relief to the injured people of Halenda. The ruler's mother is understood to have appealed to Mr Gibson, the Resident, to stop the police excesses rampant in the State and to have declared that, if the police resort to shooting, she will consider herself as being shot 'as lakhajiraja's subjects are my children.' The appeal is significant not only as bearing evidence to the prevalence of police excesses but also as revealing who is now the real ruler in the State. Miss Muriel Lester, Gandhiji's London hostess, who recently visited Rajkot, is understood to have been an eye-witness to lathi charges in which women and even children of five were injured. We trust that in the interest of justice and humanity she will soon publish, both in India and England, her first-hand experiences and impressions.

7. Gandhi Starts Fast

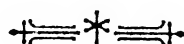
Times of India, 4 March 1939

Rajkot
3 March 1939

At the stroke of midday Mr Gandhi began an indefinite fast. It is to protest against 'the breach of promise' by the Thakore Saheb of Rajkot. It will end when the promise is redeemed.

It was an impressive scene. Incense burned in the center of the room. Mr Gandhi, who was surrounded by about 50 followers, gave the order for prayer. His favourite song and hymn were chanted. Silence prevailed. The fast had begun.

In a lengthy statement to the Press, Mr Gandhi explained the causes and objectives of his 'sacrifice', and pleaded for wholesome public opinion and 'a dignified disapproval of the Thakore Saheb's action.'



8. All India Rajkot Day Tomorrow

Bombay Chronicle, 4 March 1939

Calcutta
3 March 1939

An appeal to the country to observe Sunday, March 5, as the All India Rajkot Day is made by Subhas Chandra Bose, Congress President, in a statement to the Associated Press on hearing the news of Mahatma Gandhi commencing fast this noon.

Mr Bose says:

'The news that Mahatma Gandhi has resorted to fast over the Rajkot issue has come as a profound shock to the whole country. We are naturally profoundly concerned over the success of this cause, as well as over his health which has been none too good for some time past. We can save his life only by taking steps which will help to bring about a speedy and satisfactory settlement of the Rajkot tangle. It is, therefore, imperative on our part to put the maximum moral pressure on the Paramount Power and on the Thakore Saheb of Rajkot so that they may see the error of their ways and fall in line with the public demand on this issue.

I therefore request the public all over the country to observe Sunday, March 5, as All India Rajkot day. Though the notice is extremely short, I am sure that the observance of the All India Rajkot Day will be a success as the news of Mahatma Gandhi's fast will travel like wild fire to every corner of the country. Hartal may be observed wherever possible and in the afternoon meetings and processions should be held. Resolutions should be passed at these meetings condemning the attitude of the Paramount Power and urging the Thakore Saheb to honour his promised word so that the legitimate grievances of the Rajkot subjects may be redressed and the life of Mahatma Gandhi may be saved thereby.

I earnestly appeal to the public all over the country, regardless of their views, to cooperate wholeheartedly in making the All India Rajkot Day a supreme success.'

9. Gandhi's Fast: Erskine to Linlithgow (Tel.), 4 March 1939

Linlithgow Papers, Correspondence with the Governor of Madras and his Secretary, 1939, Acc. No. 2203, NAI

March 1939

... I am very apprehensive of bad effect that will be caused in Madras and other Provinces by continuous flood of clever sentimental propaganda about Gandhi's fast that will now undoubtedly ensure and which has in fact already begun in Press telegrams. Such propaganda will certainly stir up population and if it is allowed to continue will result in more disturbance than would otherwise occur on Gandhi's death or when an all India crisis is let loose upon us. I feel therefore that we ought to take measures to nip this danger of Press agitation in the bud. I would therefore suggest that the Government of India should order the Telegraph authorities not to pass any telegram dealing with Gandhi's health or progress of his fast. I understand that this can be done by the Central government under Section 5(1)(b) of the Indian Telegraph Act.

2. I believe it to be a fact that previous Congress subversive movements were greatly helped because for many months previous to their actual outbreak the British authorities did nothing to prevent clever Press Propaganda. I hope therefore that my suggestion in regard to Press telegrams will receive your favourable consideration.

10. On Rajkot Affairs: B.G. Kher to Roger Lumlay, 5 March 1939

B.G. Kher Papers, Personal Correspondence of B.G. Kher with the Governor Sir Roger Lumlay September 1937–October 1939, File No. 3, NMML

Bombay
5 March 1939

Your Excellency,

I have discussed the present situation with my colleagues. In our opinion it is an absolutely clear case for immediate action by the Viceroy not because Rajkot is within the sphere of the district influence of the Ministers of the Provinces, but because it is fast becoming impossible for the Ministers to do their business and is fast becoming surcharged with extreme emotion. I have already spoken to Your Excellency last evening that the public may demand our resignation at any moment and as popular Ministers it would become impossible for us to resist such a demand if it becomes insistent. We have studied the Rajkot case. There is no doubt that Gandhiji has made out a clear case of breach of promise by the Ruler. We have good grounds for belief that the Ruler of Rajkot is imbecile and has sold his conscience to his favourite Durbar Virawala. We understand that he transacts no State business. All his letters go intact to this Taluqdar. It is therefore difficult for the people of Rajkot to get justice in such circumstances. If HE the Viceroy does not intervene there will be anarchy in Rajkot. But this apart, neither the Cabinet nor the Governor, nor the Viceroy can possibly look on with indifference when matters were to reach such a stage that Gandhiji was compelled to take this step, when Gandhiji has put his life in danger.

Mahatma Gandhi is an old man, suffering from chronic blood pressure and our colleague, Dr Gilder,¹ who has an intimate knowledge for years of his body tells us that his heart shows signs of deterioration. We have grounds to believe that every hour that passes is full of peril to his life. Past experience shows that his resolve is immovable. Therefore, we ask Your Excellency to put this critical position in the Province with the quickest dispatch before the Viceroy and invite him to end the agony before it becomes too late.

Yours sincerely,

Dr M D Gilder, Health Minister, Bombay

11. On Rajkot: Zetland to Linlithgow, 5 March 1939

Zetland Papers, Acc. No. 1969, NAI

5 March 1939

3. Now let me return to Rajkot. For some little time past India has been creeping back into the news columns of the press over here, and I regret to say that Gandhi's dramatic announcement of his intention 'to fast unto death', has put her back right into the center of the picture. I must admit that his decision came to me as a surprise as it seems to have to most people in India. Birla has been telegraphing wildly to people like Edward Halifax,¹ John Anderson,² and of course myself, urging us to do something in the matter, though what precisely he expects us to do is left to our imagination. It would be rather to the point if he were to do something himself with his friends, and particularly with the Mahatma with whom he always claims to be on intimate terms. The situation which has thus been precipitated is certainly a difficult one, and I sent you a long telegram on Thursday largely because I felt impressed with the importance of our regaining the initiative.

There is also of course the probability that at any time we may have to face with a debate in one or other of the two Houses here, and if Gandhi were to die it would be essential that we should be in a position to make it clear that there was nothing unreasonable in anything that we had done to support the Ruler of Rajkot, that we were alive to the necessity of bringing to an end administrative abuses in so far as they existed and providing against their recurrence in the future. I realised of course that the situation was extremely fluid and that you alone could grapple with it as developments took place and you will not have regarded my telegram as anything more than a suggestion of possible ways of dealing with the situation as I saw it.

14. Now I come back once more to Rajkot. As result of a consultation with Stewart,¹ and one or two other on Sunday, I sent you a telegram with my suggestions as to a possible line of action. I was not, however, in the least surprised to learn from your telegram, which crossed mine, that you had already taken action with a view to getting into touch with Gandhi. It is more than fortunate that you and he are on such good terms and though there seemed to me a good deal of wild writing about the state of affairs in Rajkot in the reply which he has made to your first approach, I derive some hope from the tone of his letter so far as his personal relations with you are concerned. I shall hope that something will have come out of the discussion between Gandhi and Gibson which was due to take place at 8 O'clock Indian time yesterday evening. I shall no doubt receive information about this in course of the day. I noticed incidentally that the ubiquitous Agatha Harrison² had made her way to Rajkot and I hope that she may be able to exercise some influence with the Mahatma. I saw Neville Chamberlain yesterday evening and explained the circumstances of the case to him. Though he did not say very much I got the impression that we were doing all that was possible and that we could not be expected to bring pressure to bear upon the Thakore Saheb to give way to Gandhi's ultimatum.

¹ Edward Halifax, b. 1881; education, Christ Church, and All Souls, Oxford; Parliamentary Under Secretary for the colonies 1921-22; Viceroy of India 1926-31; Lord Privy Seal, 1935-37; Leader of House of Lords, 1935-38; Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 1938-40.

² John Anderson, b. 1882; Educ: George Watson's College, Edinburgh; Hon. I.L.D.; entered colonial Service 1905; Permanent Under Secretary for State, 1902-32, Governor of Bengal, 1932-37; Lord Privy Seal, 1938-39; Home Secretary and Minister of Home Security.

³ Fianas William Stewart, b. 1885; education: Christs Hospital; Trinity College, Cambridge; entered ICS, 1908; Member, Council of State, India 1934-35; First member, Board of Revenue, Madras; retired in 1944.

⁴ Agatha Harrison (1885-1954); English woman; closely associated with Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and M.K. Gandhi; actively supported Indian Freedom Movement.

12. The Hindu Mahasabha Perspective: Ganpat Rai to B.S. Moonje. 8 March 1939 All India Hindu Mahasabha Papers, File No. C-21, NMML

8 March 1939

My dear Dr Moonje

I dropped you a letter this morning but I forgot to bring it to your notice that the Princes are meeting at Delhi from 10th to 15th instant. After the Rajkot drama it is essential that you should meet them and awaken them to their sense of consciousness against the pernicious effects of Congress and Gandhi's rule in their states. One of our Hindu leader who is now in the service of a State has informed us that one effect of the Congress movement in the State is that the states have to seek the help of Muslims of their states and outside Muslims generally. Gandhi in his Rajkot statement after the fast has promised the Mohammadans separate Electorates with reservation

of seats in Rajkot State. If communalism is accepted at Rajkot it will be accepted in all other states. Please do visit Delhi during the session of the Prince's Chamber and try to rally them round the Hindu Mahasabha banner. The Hindu Mahasabha also badly wants funds to do propaganda both of press and platform to counteract the activities of the Congress in the States.

This letter is being written after consultation with Shree Bhaiji and Babarao Savarkar.

With kind regards,

Yours sincerely,

13. Gandhi's appeal to the people of Rajkot

Harijan, 18 March 1939, *CWMG*, Vol. 69, pp. 44-45

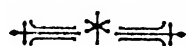
9 March 1939

Through the grace of God, the object of my coming to Rajkot has been fulfilled. The Thakore Saheb, and with his consent the Paramount Power, have given assurance that the Thakore Saheb's word will be honoured and Rajkot will have a Constitution in terms of the Notification of 26 December 1938. This is the simple and common-sense interpretation of the telegraphic communications between HE the Viceroy and myself. The result has surpassed all my expectations. The honour of both the ruler and the rules has been vindicated and the sufferings of the people have borne fruit. Let us all offer our thanks to the Almighty. Such a happy ending would have been impossible without His grace and intervention.

I would not go into the other points mentioned in my letter to the Thakore Saheb. I have given them up. It should be sufficient for all concerned to know that I am aware of the fact that restrictions on the press and other repressive measures have not been withdrawn. My efforts for their withdrawal continue, and I am sure they will go shortly.

Let us not indulge in exultation over this settlement. The real work will begin now only. Responsible Government will come, but will the people be to shoulder burden and rise equal to their task? If they are to give a proper account of themselves, they will have to begin preparing from today. They would not need, for this purpose, to hold meeting and deliver speeches. If meetings are held at all, they should be for the purpose of educating the public. Every citizen of Rajkot will have to contribute his or her mite if success is to crown our efforts.

1. There should be real Hindu-Muslim unity.
2. The canker of untouchability and the distinction between high and low must be uprooted from the heart of the Hindu community.
3. It should be realised that we have no other sanction at our disposal except that of truth and non-violence. We should, therefore, understand their working in our everyday dealings.
4. The public should cultivate the spirit of co-operative service.
5. Young men and women in their numbers should come forward to dedicate their lives to the service of the people.
6. We must rid ourselves of petty jealousies and bickering and learn to be disciplined.
7. The people should shed their lethargy and occupy themselves with some useful activity like spinning, etc. Everyone should take the vow of Kṛādi.
8. Those who are educated should help their illiterate brethren to read and write.



14. On the Viceroy's 'Intervention':

Secretary of State to Viceroy (Tel.), 10 March 1939

Linlithgow Papers, No. 75, Private & Personal No. 165, Acc. No. 2161, NAI

10 March 1939

... I have already telegraphed expressing my appreciation of your intervention which has evoked widespread satisfaction in India and here. We have now to consider very carefully how to meet Gandhi's further demands to be anticipated from terms of his reply. I feel that your main object will be to isolate Rajkot issue from those affecting other States in which Congress are claiming right to intervene in interests of State's subject. Having regard to Gandhi's dialectical methods we may assume that this will not be an altogether easy task, and I am very desirous of affording you such assistance as may be possible from having defined in advance our attitude towards the main issues affecting States generally....

15. Reaction to the breaking of Gandhi's fast: H.J. Twynam,

Governor of Assam, to Viceroy, 10 March 1939

Linlithgow Papers, Acc. No. 2174, NAI

Shillong

10 March 1939

1. Your telegram ... regarding immediate reactions to the outcome of your Excellency's intervention to save Gandhi from the consequences of self-imposed fast.

2. Everyone is relieved that Gandhi's life has been spared; of that, I think, there can be no doubt—but the relief springs from different sources. In Assam, the two Congress Ministers are relieved because they are no longer faced with the necessity of resigning office; the remaining six Ministers are also relieved because the resignation of the two Congress Ministers would have placed them in the embarrassing position of having to realign themselves with the United Assam Party.

Among the rank and file in the legislature and the general public (both Congress and non-Congress) there is relief at being allowed to get on with the jobs and escaping from the turmoil which would inevitably have followed on Gandhi's death. Among the Europeans and the services, relief, I think, arises chiefly from the fact that Gandhi has not been allowed to score off the British, finally and for all time, by adding the martyr's crown to the weapons with which the British connection may be dissolved.

16. On the breaking of Gandhi's fast:

Zetland to Linlithgow, 14 March 1939

Zetland Papers, Acc. No. 1969, NAI

not dated

3. I had just finished my letter of the 5th when I received the news of breaking of Gandhi's fast. My congratulations to you on the ingenious suggestion which you made to him and which enabled him to resume negotiations with you. The chorus of the approbation in the Indian Press is very pleasing, though, as you and I know only too well, the gratitude of political India is a very ephemeral thing and is liable at any moment to turn into abuse. I shall look forward with much interest to

hearing Gwyer's verdict, though I confess that I shall be pleasantly surprised if, in view particularly of Thakore Saheb's private letter to Patel, it does not go in favour of Gandhi's view of its meeting of the documents, I shall be a little afraid that we shall run some risk of the highest judicial authority in India being accused of political bias. That, however, is a risk which we have to run. So far as I am concerned, I pin greater hope of an improvement in the general situation emerging from your personal discussion with Gandhi, which I learn from your telegram are to take place tomorrow.

17. Historic Talks

Bombay Chronicle, 15 March 1939

15 March 1939

The Gandhi-Linlithgow talks which are to take place today are doubtless historic but whether or not they will lead to far reaching results will obviously depend less upon the Viceroy's response to them than on the way they are followed up by the people. The formal part of the talks, arising out of the agreement between the two, will be very limited in its scope. It will refer only to Rajkot and to topics other than those to be referred to the Chief Justice of India. The Viceroy's invitation to Gandhi for a personal interview does not by itself lay down narrow limits. He says therein 'I shall be very glad to see you here and discuss matters with you so that any misapprehensions may be removed.' But the context of the agreement confines the formal talks to Rajkot. They will refer principally to the procedure to be followed in referring any points to the Federal Chief Justice and enquiry into allegations of maltreatment of prisoners in Rajkot and of general mal-administration in the State. Informally, however, the entire situation in India will be reviewed, particularly in connection with reforms in the States. A long interview with Gandhiji is a rare privilege and the Viceroy will not fail to make the fullest use of it, particularly in view of the country's formally reiterating its confidence in his leadership.

The talks by themselves will not bring about any radical change immediately even in Rajkot. The investigation into allegation of malpractices may affect certain present officers and these or new ones will be more careful hereafter in dealing with satyagrahis. But beyond that it will have little influence in matters constitutional. As regards the Reforms Committee it may still present many difficulties. Its personnel will depend on the Chief Justice's interpretation of the Thakore Saheb's letter to Sardar Vallabhbhai. If the Chief Justice upholds the Thakore's interpretation that he is free to nominate or not to nominate the persons recommended by the Sardar, the resulting difficulties are obvious and they will lead to fresh ones. It may also be noted that Gandhiji himself having accepted reference to the Chief Justice, will have to accept the decision and give a chance to the Committee of the Thakore's choice, though he is free to deal with the Committee's Report as he likes. Even if the Chief Justice decides in favour of the interpretation of Gandhiji and the Sardar and the public in general, that the Sardar's nominations must be accepted at least to the extent of ensuring a majority for the Praja Parishad, certain minority groups that have been incited to demand separate representation will not make matters smooth for the Committee. For, as the Viceroy says in his letter to Gandhiji, 'should any difference arise between the members of the Committee as to the meaning of any part of the notification (the Thakore's) on which they were to make recommendations, this question would also be referred to the same high authority whose decision would be final.' And in all such cases, too, Gandhiji will have to accept the decisions, if only for the time being. But if the Reforms Committee does not contain a majority of the Parishad, Gandhiji is under no obligation to accept as final the report of the Committee. And this point, we expect, will be made clear in the Delhi talks.

We have suggested only a few of the difficulties that still beset the Rajkot problem. If the Thakore is wise and removes them by minimizing the references to arbitration and by arriving at a settlement with Gandhiji—that we believe, is not yet too late for him—it will help himself and all other concerned. However, in any case, the difficulties will not be all got over. Only, that will depend, as we have said at the outset, less on the Viceroy's decision in connection with his talks with Gandhiji than on the people of Rajkot. And what will be the repercussions of the solution of the Rajkot problem? Says Gandhiji: 'Rajkot is the hub of Kathiawar, and if Rajkot is given a popular Government, other States in Kathiawar will of their own accord and without any further civil resistance fall in line.' We are not quite so hopeful. We mean that the Kathiawar States will have to fall in line sure enough but will not do so quite so soon and voluntarily as Gandhiji expects. The Viceroy, in his address to the Chamber of Princes said little or nothing about Responsible Government but clearly pointed out that any reforms given by a Ruler must be 'consistent with his treaty obligations'. The Chancellor's reply also does not mention Responsible Government even as an ideal and the princes are said to have loudly applauded the Viceroy's insistence on treaty obligations. We shall have to say more on these obsolete treaties on another occasion. Meanwhile, Gandhiji will, we trust, get clear-cut unequivocal statement from the Viceroy as to whether treaty obligations preclude the grant of complete Responsible Government, as distinct from partial Responsible Government.

18. Linlithgow–Gandhi meeting: Linlithgow to Hallet, 18 March 1939

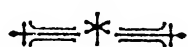
Hallet Papers, Acc. No. 3948, NAI

not dated

Secret

My dear Hallet,

Let me first of all thank you for your kind reference to the success of my endeavours to persuade the Mahatma to discontinue his fast. I do not feel the least doubt in the light of subsequent developments that despite the very considerable risk of misunderstanding involved, the course we took was the right one. I had in the last two days two lengthy interviews with him, and was frankly astonished how well he stood up to what must at the age of 70, however great the lavished on one, be a very considerable physical and nervous strain. I thought he shows signs of being a little older physically. But mentally he was alert to a degree, and very concerned to press every point in connection with the Rajkot agreement which he thought he had the least chance of securing. But though we had a good deal of hard argument I think I can feel that things went satisfactorily. I am glad also to think that, even if on points arising out of the discussions we did not find ourselves in agreement, the discussions were throughout most friendly and we parted on the best of terms. I seemed, indeed, to sense a somewhat marked change in the atmosphere and I got the feeling that Mr Gandhi and his entourage, while they will no doubt be as ready to criticize or make a point to our disadvantage as ever, were personally more friendly, and that there was a lack of that antagonism which one has noticed on earlier occasions



19. Follow Up

Article by N.G. Gore, in *Congress Socialist*, 19 March 1939

19 March 1939

On 3rd of March Gandhiji commenced his fast and on 7th he broke it. Within that short space of about hundred hours, public opinion in this vast continent of a country rose to boiling point and again cooled down to normal. The Viceroy cut short his tour and Congress Cabinets threatened to resign. Rajkot had suddenly become the hub of the world. At the end of the fast Gandhiji came out victorious, though it is difficult to estimate the value of his triumph in terms of political currency. In the statement which he released immediately after he had broken his fast he declared "I know my millions" quite true.¹ But the most pertinent question to ask is 'Does his millions know him? Can they know him?' the scores of thousands who lined the streets of Rajkot and cheered him on his way to Delhi—what was in their mind? Did they look upon his victory as their own? Did they consider his fast as the spearhead of their revolutionary movement and a natural culmination of their democratic fight? Have we not unconsciously cultivated the habit of looking upon Gandhiji as a superman who steps out to help us every time we tie ourselves in knots, but whose inscrutable ways are not the ways of men like you and me? Gandhiji's methods and his logic in their highest expression are pre-eminently undemocratic in the sense that they cannot be understood, explained, or practised by 'his millions.' They do not foresee his decisions nor do they understand the process by which he arrived at them. If this reasoning is correct, it means that Rajkot fast can mean the termination of a chapter but cannot be a call to mass-action.

From Haripura to Tripuri the movement in the States cannot describe a rising curve. The Congress supported the States' people, though it could not do so organisationally. And as the struggles gathered momentum and spread all along the front, the line laid down by Haripura nearly disappeared, and it was realised the struggle was in the ultimate analysis only a part of the wider struggle between British Imperial interests and the people of India, succeeded in devising a more satisfactory method of dealing with the problems which have confronted Your Highness, than the scheme of Federation embedded in the Act of 1935. With regard to Responsible Government in the States he has alluded to it in these vague words.... 'The decision as to the constitution best suited to the needs of his people and his state rests with the Ruler himself' (sic). These are ominous words. Does it mean that in Indian body politic we shall have so many political units working at different levels of political evolution?

The Ludhiana resolution¹ is clear on this point. It says that 'it is therefore in their (Rulers) interest to issue unequivocal declaration of their decision to establish full Responsible Government and immediately to bring the system of the administration to the level with that prevailing in the rest of India.'

In the light of Tripuri and Ludhiana the imperative duty of the INC and the States' People's Conference leaves no room for doubt. We have to implement the resolutions. Once the rulers decide to join Federation, the Imperialist-Feudal axis will be still more strengthened. To counteract its influence we must forge a parallel axis, the Congress-State people axis. And as that axis already exists the only question is that of cementing and reinforcing it. We can do so if instead of fixing our gaze on Delhi and wasting our time on calculations as to the possible outcome of Gandhi-Linlithgow confabulations, we prepare to strike at the root viz. the Act of 1935.

¹ See above 'Ludhiana Report by R. Kapadia', n.d.

20. Mahatma's talks with Muslims

Bombay Chronicle, 14 April 1939

Rajkot
13 April 1939

The 'United Press' understands that the bone of contention in the hitch over the Rajkot negotiations with the Muslims is not merely the personnel of the Reforms Committee but the wider questions of their future rights, namely, joint electorate, representation in the Services, religious and civil rights and certain safeguards.

It is understood that an agreement has been reached on many of these points with Mahatma at a five hour discussion, held within closed doors at 'Anand Kunj' last night, between Gandhiji and the Muslim deputation. The deputation is meeting Gandhiji again for the last time to explore the possibility of a settlement on two more points and reach final decision. Greatest significance is attached to the discussions as a settlement of the present impasse hangs by this slender thread.

21. On Reforms Committee

Hindustan Times, 16 April 1939

Rajkot
15 April 1939

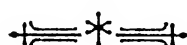
It is now definitely learnt that negotiations between Mahatma Gandhi and the Muslim deputationists regarding the personnel of the Muslim representation on the Reforms Committee have broken down. The Muslim deputation visited Gandhiji at noon and after half an hour's talk it withdrew.

After the failure of the negotiations with the Muslims, Mahatma Gandhi on behalf of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel has sent a letter to the Thakore Saheb submitting a list of seven names¹ for the Reforms Committee. This list does not include Muslims. In the course of a statement to the Press, Mahatma Gandhi explains that in accordance with the Gwyer Award² the Thakore Saheb's four nominees automatically drop out.

¹ The seven names recommended by Gandhi were as follows:-

1. Popatlal Purushotam Anand.
2. Basherwalia Wadher
3. Popatlal Dhangibhaai Malviya
4. Zamndas Khushal Chand Gandhi
5. Vrajlal Mayashankar Shukla
6. Jathalal Harikushna Joshi
7. Gajanan Bhawani Shanker Joshi.

² Sir Maurice Gwyer, Chief Justice of India declared his award on 3 April which found that 'the time construction of each document is that the Thakore Saheb undertakes to appoint the persons whom Vallabhbhai Patel may recommend....' For full text see *IAR*, Vol. I, 1939, p. 57. For the text of statement, see *CWMG*, Vol. 69, pp. 138-141.



22. Angry Demonstrations against Gandhi

Times of India, 17 April 1939

Rajkot
16 April 1939

Mr Gandhi this evening was the object of a black flag demonstration organised by the Bhayats and Girasias to protest against his refusal to include their representative¹ on the Reforms Committee.

A few hundred demonstrators surrounded the devotional congregation, with Mr Gandhi in the Centre, and shouted hostile slogans while the prayer was in progress. They tried to rush the gate.

At the end of the prayer, Mr Gandhi walked towards the crowd and found himself in the midst of an inimical mob. He dismissed his associates and insisted on walking through the crowd alone. Eventually, he accepted the escort of a person who he thought was a Bhayat, and walked down the pathway through the crowd to the car waiting about 50 yards away.

Durbar Jiwan Singh, Bhayats' representative in the old reform committee.

23. B.R. Ambedkar on Rajkot Committee

Bombay Chronicle, 19 April 1939

Bombay
18 April 1939

Over two thousand members and followers of the Independent Labour party thronged the Juhu Aerodrome this morning to give a send off to their leader Dr B.R. Ambedkar who has fled to Rajkot.

Interviewed Dr Ambedkar said:

'We all seem to be going about the business in a hopeless wrong fashion. For one thing I don't understand the idea that the personnel of the Committee should be confined to the bona fide residents of Rajkot.

In working on this basis Mr Gandhi has accepted the idea that Indians living in one particular State or province are foreigners in another state or province. It's a dangerous line to take, and, carried to its logical conclusion, will spilt up this country into tiny little bits, meeting the same fate as Europe is witnessing today.'

Then there is a more fundamental question. Rajkot, it must be remembered, is a very small State. The annual income of the State is about ten lakhs, which compares hopelessly with the annual income of 3½ crores which Bombay city gets from a single tax, that on landed property. Financially, therefore, the whole of Rajkot is less valuable than say, Grant Road, or Dadar or Parel.

'What are we going to do with such a little State?' asked Dr Ambedkar. 'The idea that we should set up full-fledged parliaments in every one of these hundreds of States with elected Ministers and parliamentary Secretaries and secretariat, is too preposterous to be taken seriously, yet it is along this line that Mr Gandhi has been working.'

The handling of the constitutional problems of a small State like Rajkot is not quite so easy as it seems. There is no meaning in asking a few local people with their limited talents and experience of constitutional problems to report on the subject. If Mr Gandhi was serious about making Rajkot constitution a model for the smaller States he should have got together the best constitutional

experts, politicians and professors in India and if necessary from outside, and put them on the Committee. Then we would have secured a report that would have been of use not only for Rajkot but for all the smaller States.

Then the basis on which the Committee is forged is also wrong. What Mr Gandhi wants on the Committee is a mechanical numerical majority.

Mechanical majority of this is, apart from all other considerations, wrong in principle. It means that the issues will be decided not necessarily on their merits but by counting of hands which is certainly not how the experts carry out responsibilities of this nature.

And if we are going to follow the old method why should Mr Gandhi have violated the principle which he has accepted in the Poona Pact?

The Poona Pact accepts the claim that the Depressed Classes are a separate entity that requires separate representation for the protection of their interests. It accepts that those interests cannot be represented by anyone except by the chosen leaders of the Depressed Classes.

24. Jinnah on the Boycott of Rajkot Committee

Times of India, 19 April 1939

[See also the statement of MMS Ludhiana, Secretary of the Bombay Presidency Muslim League in *Bombay Chronicle*, 22 April and *Times of India*, 24 April 1939. In the Statement he stated that 'Mr Gandhi has blundered in the Rajkot issue from the beginning instead of utilizing this God-sent opportunity to bring about a rapprochement between the two major communities of India he has actually acted in such a manner that he has strengthened the suspicions of the Muslims that Mr Gandhi and his group are actuated by anti-Muslim feelings and has thereby actually widened the already wide gulf between the two communities.']

New Delhi

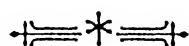
18 April 1939

Mr M.A. Jinnah, President of the All-India Muslim League, in a statement to the Press says that Mr Gandhi has proved beyond doubt that he wants the Muslims to be his creatures, to carry out his behests, by insisting upon their agreement beforehand to obey his orders and vote as he would finally order them to do, even for the purpose of formulating the recommendations for the political constitutional advancement of the people of Rajkot.

The Statement adds:

'The fact that Mr Gandhi insisted upon a Parishad majority, which means the pact committee of Mr Vallabhbhai Patel, is quite clear that he does not desire to cooperate with Muslims as free and equal collaborators. The Parishad only represents one party amongst the people of Rajkot, and to assume that it alone has the monopoly of patriotism and the Muslims are to be considered as suspects is, in my opinion, Mr Gandhi's fundamental blunder.

The first step that I will advise the Muslims of Rajkot to take is to boycott this pact committee and urge upon the Rajkot to decline to treat it as a representative committee of the people of Rajkot.'



25. On Rajkot: Zetland to Linlithgow, 18 April 1939

Zetland Papers, Acc. No. 1969, NAI

not dated

The situation in Rajkot seems to have reached something approaching a deadlock, and this time Gandhi seems to have gone back on his word to secure the representation of the Reforms Committee for the Muslims and the Bhayats. According to one account which appeared in the newspapers here, he became the subject of hostile demonstration with the customary display of black flags when leaving the State. Incidentally, Sir Patrick Cadell told me quite definitely that at the meeting which took place between the Thakore Saheb and Patel on December 25th, the Thakore Saheb did not agree to commit himself to appointing the persons recommended by Patel, and if this is so some part of the conclusion drawn by Gwyer would appear to be ill-founded. However, that is all now past history.

26. Rajkot Harijans' Demand

Times of India, 22 April 1939*Ahmedabad*
20 April 1939

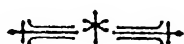
A lengthy review of the Rajkot dispute was given by Dr B.R. Ambedkar, who arrived here this morning after seeing Mr Gandhi at Rajkot and addressed a largely attended meeting of Harijans, at the Premabhai Hall in the evening under the auspices of the Maha Gujarat Dalit Nav Yuvak Mandal.

Dr Ambedkar said that there were four classes of people in Rajkot, namely, high caste Hindus, Muslims, Bhayats or Girasias and Harijans. He had learned that Mr Gandhi had promised representation on the Committee to Muslims and Bhayats, but was not prepared to take a Harijan representative on the Committee, and has expressed the view that representatives of high caste Hindus would look after the interests of Harijans.

Dr Ambedkar continued that he has a written pledge from the Thakore Saheb of Rajkot that he was prepared to take a representative of the Harijans on the Committee. The Rajkot Durbar was with them, but the hitch in their way comes from Mr Gandhi. He had accordingly gone to Rajkot to discuss the question with Mr Gandhi. He had suggested to Mr Gandhi to leave aside the question of the Committee and entrust the matter to any outstanding and unbiased personality. He had recommended the name of Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru for the purpose, but Mr Gandhi had not accepted the proposal. If Mr Gandhi had accepted it, there would have been no need for the Harijans to continue their fight for a seat on the committee. Dr Ambedkar stated that pressure should be brought upon Mr Gandhi and the British Government to include a Harijan representative on the Committee.

Dr Ambedkar appealed to Ahmedabad Harijans to help the Rajkot Harijans. The question of Rajkot Harijans affected all Harijans elsewhere, and if they were not able to get what they wanted at Rajkot their cause at other places would also suffer.

The meeting passed a resolution that one seat on the Committee should be allowed to Harijans.



27. Illusion of Change of Heart

Independent India, 23 April 1939, Vol. 3, No. 17

23 April 1939

Gandhiji embarked on his historic fast with the idea of effecting a change of heart in the Thakore Saheb, with the intention of bringing moral pressure upon him to compel him to stand by his plighted word. The Thakore Saheb was compelled to do the latter, but not by moral pressure but by, in the last instance, the physical force of the British bayonets. Regarding the change of heart it should be amply clear by now that no change for the better has been effected. The Thakore Saheb has on the contrary become more arrogant, more intriguing and more disinclined to listen to the voice of justice and reason. This is but natural. For the Thakore Saheb represents a system, a system which sees a challenge to this existence in the growing assertion of the people's will and is as such opposed to make any concessions to it. The question of change of heart is irrelevant in this connection. It is a pure question of relation of forces dependent on the strength of the people as against that of the Ruler and his agents. If the Rajkot question has been approached from this point of view, as it was in the initial stages, the issue would have been decided long ago. But Gandhiji intervened with his metaphysical notions and queer moral remedies and disorganised a political struggle which was growing from strength to strength. If a method can be judged from its results it should be clear from the Rajkot experience that the Gandhian method of relying on a change of heart and of seeking to affect it by fasts has proved ineffective. The Rajkot people are no nearer their goal of Responsible Government or the solution of their immediate problems by all that Gandhiji did for them heroically by placing even his invaluable life in danger. It is high time that the people are allowed to revert to the original method of direct mass action. And once that is brought into operation the tangle will be solved in no time.

28. Gandhi's Statement to the Press

Harijan, 29 April 1939, *CWMG*, Vol. 69, pp. 168-171

On the train to Bombay

24 April 1939

Rajkot seems to have robbed me of my youth. I never knew that I was old. Now I am weighed down by the knowledge of decrepitude. I never knew what it was to lose hope. But it seems to have been cremated in Rajkot. My ahimsa has been put to a test such as it has never been subjected to before.

I have given fifteen precious days to have the Committee contemplated in the Award of the Chief Justice of India. But difficulties lie in my path. The Award was acclaimed throughout India as a complete victory for the Sardar. But it has been effectively used against me for accusing me of a breach of promise to the Muslims and Bhayats. The promise that the Thakore Saheb had made was on my return from Delhi transferred to my poor shoulders. The plain meaning of all I had said could only be that I should help the Thakore Saheb to carry out his promise, though, according to the Award, I need not. Whatever the reason might be, both the Muslims and the Bhayats relieved the Thakore Saheb of duty of fulfillment of the promise.

Failing to placate the Muslims and the Bhayats, I sent the Thakore Saheb seven names of the Parishad. In reply I was called upon to prove that six out of the seven names were Rajkot State subjects. One would have thought that I would at least be given an inkling of the objections. If

every statement made by men presumed to be fairly honourable could be challenged, it might take a year to finish an inquiry into the facts of each case. But I have sent the required proofs.

When I seemed to have come to the end of my resources and my patience, I sent a letter of complaint to the Resident as the local representative of the Paramount Power seeking his aid in terms of the Viceregal assurances given to me. He invited me to an interview. And whilst we were discussing the ways and means an idea flashed across my mind that I should end the agony by forging the right of nomination of members of the Committee, and so I made what I thought, and the Resident admitted, was a sporting offer. It was that the whole Committee should be selected by the Thakore Saheb to report in accordance with the terms of the Notification of 26th December last, provided that its report should be shown to the Parishad, and that if they found that the report did not carry out the terms of the Notification, their dissenting note and the original report should be sent to the Chief Justice for his decision. The Resident sent my offer to Durbar Shri Virawla, but HH the Thakore Saheb has turned it down.

Agonising experience of the fifteen days have resulted in my making the discovery that my ahimsa should be voted down as failure if the Thakore Saheb and Durbar Shri Virawala were to feel that they had to give anything under pressure from above. My ahimsa demanded that I should remove that feeling. And so when the opportunity came to me, I tried to assure Durbar Shri Virawala that I took no delight in invoking the assistance of the Paramount Power. Apart from ahimsa, my connection with Rajkot should impose that restraint on me. I assured him that my spontaneous offer to Mr Gibson was an effort in that direction. He immediately retorted: 'But if you are not satisfied with His Highness Committee's report, you claim the right to scrutinise the report in the light of the Notification, and if the Parishad dissents, you want to have the report and the dissent to be examined by the Hon. the Chief Justice of India. Do you call this removing the feeling of pressure? Why not trust His Highness and his adviser through and through? You may not get all you want, but whatever you get will be charged with his goodwill and will carry a promise of full delivery. Do you know what the Parishad people have said about the Thakore Saheb and me? Is that the way of a people desiring reforms from their Prince?' There was bitterness in his speech and contempt for the Parishad people. But with the sudden consciousness of my imperfect handling of ahimsa, instead of carrying the blow, I recognised the force of his argument as showing want of faith in the essential goodness of human nature and littleness of my own belief in ahimsa. And so our conversation went on and covered many proposals. But it was inconclusive. I was no nearer solution of the tangle. Nevertheless. I parted with the feeling that we had come to know each other better, and that in trying to woo Durbar Shri Virawala I was on the right track.

And so I presented this new line of approach to my workers. They had more than once told me that Durbar Shri Virawala was the cause of all the evil that had descended upon Rajkot and that his removal would mean for them full swaraj. I had no difficulty in showing them that what they were thinking of was good Government, not self-Government. At this meeting, which only took place yesterday, I told them that if they accepted my explanation of ahimsa, they would have to set their heart not on getting rid of Durbar Shri Virawala, but on converting him. This they could do only if they would set about finding his good points and working at them. They must develop infinite faith in the capacity of ahimsa to neutralize every person with ahimsa. True ahimsa lay in running into the mouth of ahimsa. If cows could be credited with intelligence, it is conceivable that given a sufficient number of such cows who would run into the tiger's mouth, the latter would lose the relish for cow flesh and change his nature. They must, therefore, shed their fear of Durbar Shri Virawala and their disbelief in the power of ahimsa to achieve the seemingly impossible.

They listened to this (to them) new doctrine with attention. I did not ask them whether they were convinced. I hope they were. They would quite legitimately have asked me: 'Are you yourself

so convinced of the correctness of this extraordinary attitude you have commended to us as to tear the Award to pieces and simply rely upon the goodness of Durbar Shri Virawala's heart?' If they had asked this question, I would have been obliged to say: 'I have not yet found the requisite courage. Ahimsa accrues only to the courageous'.

And so I have left empty-handed, with body shattered, hope cremated. Rajkot has been to me a priceless laboratory. My patience has been sorely tried by the tortuous politics of Kathiawar. I have asked the workers to confer with Durbar Shri Virawala, to forget me and Sardar Patel, and if they get enough to satisfy their least wants, they may accept the offer without reference to either of us. I have told Durbar Shri Virawala, 'I am defeated. May you win. Placate the people by giving as much as possible and write to me so as to revive the hope which I seem to have lost for the moment.'

29. On Gandhi's Statement

Statement issued by K.D. Vaidya on the Rajkot situation, 27 April 1939, AISPC Papers, File No. 12, Group no. 1, NMML

Jhansi
27 April 1939

Sjt Kanhaiyalal D. Vaidya, General Secretary of the Central India States' People's Conference and a member of the Standing Committee of the All India States' People's Conference, has issued the following statement to the Press on the present Rajkot situation:

'Robbed of victory at Rajkot and tricked into a truce at Travancore and Jaipur, Mahatma has been placed in a cruel quandary, out of which he can be extricated either by Lord Linlithgow or a united action of the Calcutta AICC.'

Mahatma has told Virawala that 'I am defeated. May you win. Ahimsa accrues only to the courageous and so I have left empty-handed with body shattered, hope cremated.' These words of Mahatma must be an eye opener to those reactionary forces in the States who are at the moment gleefully gloating over Gandhiji's defeat at Rajkot. Certainly it is a triumph of intrigue and obstruction, not so much against Gandhiji as against the people of Rajkot and the Crown Representative as the embodiment of the Paramount Power.

...The Rajkot question should be made a scene of trial of strength between the Congress and the State Ruler, and if the situation demands the resignations of Congress Ministries they must resign en bloc to create a first class Constitutional crisis. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the President of the All-India States' People's Conference, must now come forward and give a strong fight to these reactionary forces of the Indian States...

30. On Rajkot: Linlithgow to Zetland, 27 April 1939

Zetland Papers, Acc. No. 1967, NAI

not dated

The Rajkot situation continues to go on its own way; and the latest turn which it has taken is, as you will have gathered, that Gandhi has temporarily abandoned Rajkot, as he is on his way to Calcutta to attend a meeting of the All India Congress Committee. It seems pretty clear that he finds himself very awkwardly placed under the Chief Justice's Award, confronted with what one cannot but regard as the extremely skilful tactical handling of the Thakore case by Virawala... Had he not given these rather unwisely generally stated undertakings to the Muslims and the

Bhayats, his position, I would judge would have been a great deal easier in fact than it proved to be; and it looks as though difficulties which those undertakings present, have been further aggravated by the uncompromising attitude adopted by the local Praja Parishad. I should myself have thought that there was a good deal from all points of view to be said for what is alleged to have been his latest offer, viz., that the Thakore should prepare his own scheme of reforms but should give Gandhi a chance to comment on it before putting it into effect and it would appear from one of Gibson's telegrams that the Durbar, though with a hesitation not altogether unnatural on the part of a small State dealing with someone of the eminence of Gandhi, were apparently prepared at any rate to consider this proposal which was however withdrawn as the result of the intransigence of the Praja Parishad before any action could be taken on it. I put it to Glancy a little while ago that there seemed to me to be a great deal to be said on the merits for encouraging the Thakore Saheb to produce a remarkable scheme of reforms himself, in the hope that it would be accepted by the Mahatma, if not indeed by local politicians; but Glancy's view was that we should better do to wait, and I did not feel justified in pressing my suggestion against him. I am by no means certain that it is not still the right way out in the present circumstances, though I am fully alive to the difficulties of making a move of that nature in face of an offer such as that reported to have been made by Gandhi but withdrawn under the pressure of the Parishad. I would frankly be very glad to get the Rajkot impasse cleared up on any reasonable items. So long as it exists it has definitely embarrassing possibilities, even though we, the Paramount Power, are so little responsible for the present state of things as we were for the Thakore's original unfortunate decision to commit himself to Patel without taking advice of anyone. However, we can but see how things develop.

31. Choice for Rajkot

Congress Socialist, 7 May 1939

— 7 May 1939

We have very carefully gone through Mahatma Gandhi's Statement appearing in yesterday's press. For us, Mahatmaji's statement makes a painful reading both because of the mental agony under which Gandhiji has been suffering on account of Rajkot tangle, and the tragic end of the people's struggle...

In our opinion, the new line suggested by Mahatma namely the line of wooing Durbar Virawala is not a proper and correct line to get Responsible Government. We are convinced that it is impossible to effect Virawala's conversion. But even if it was possible to convert Virawala, that would not take the Rajkot people a step nearer to Responsible Government for it is as plain as day light that the day on which the conversion of Virawala is effected Virawala would no longer be Virawala, and he would be thrown away as an exploded bullet and a used up weapon to the dustbin of history, by the class to which he belongs and whose interests he represents, namely, the autocratic principedom of Kathiawar, and the question of Responsible Government will still remain unsolved.

So the new line of approach of Mahatma, the line of wooing and conversion of Virawala, being impractical and not in keeping with the reality of the situation is unacceptable to us. The reality of the Rajkot struggle is that the struggle is not between the people of Rajkot on one side, and Durbar Virawala on the other. But the struggle is between the people of Rajkot, who have been for the last eight months bravely fighting the battle for making the State administration responsible to the people, and the feudal autocracy, represented by the Thakore Saheb of Rajkot and Durbar Virawala, striving to maintain and consolidate irresponsible, undemocratic and unpopular rule. The struggle is between the people as a whole and the feudal autocracy.

So the only correct line of approach is not the line of conversion and change of heart of Virawala, but the line of struggle, the line of the unification of all popular forces, the line of establishing unity between Hindus, Muslims and the lower and Depressed-classed stratas of the Bhayats.

Mahatmaji has also asked the people of Rajkot to accept 'if they get enough to satisfy their least wants' without reference to either Sardar or himself. This, in plain language, means Capitulation. The people of Rajkot would certainly have got what they are getting today, had they taken the way of conferring with and propitiating Durbar Virawala even before the struggle. But they chose the road of struggle and fought for Responsible Government and not the paltry crumbs thrown by authorities and they were convinced that struggle was the only correct way to achieve Responsible Government.

Since Mahatmaji's statement, a section of the local workers has been meeting, conferring and negotiating with Durbar Shri Virawala. We refuse to associate ourselves with these underhand efforts at solving the Rajkot tangle keeping the public in dark. We can have nothing to do with these parading before Virawala, the most dangerous man to the interests of the people of Rajkot. We emphatically believe that the only way to solve the Rajkot tangle is to demand immediate and uncompromising implementation of the Gwyer Award. We must move forward in this direction.

If the Rajkot authorities fail to implement the award, which it can do, only with direct or indirect support of the Central Government, we must accept the reality of defeat and reorganize and galvanise our forces for launching an India wide struggle against British Imperialism on the issue of native States. We don't want to close our eyes to the reality that Rajkot people alone are not today in a position immediately to launch on a 3rd struggle. But then, this does not create a bar in our way of reorganising and vitalising the movement. This is the only and also the correct way to solve the Rajkot tangle and also the All India State problems. All other methods, suspensions of struggle, conversions of individual Dewans of Princes, change of heart etc. ... are bound to lead the State people to ruin.

Till now we have sealed our lips and kept mum so as not to jeopardize the United Front—the United Front of the Left and the Right—against the autocratic Government of the State for the achievement of Responsible Government. We Leftists are still prepared for that. But we refuse to co-operate in wooing Durbar Virawala, the emblem of autocracy and despotism; we refuse to cooperate in capitulating; we refuse to cooperate in liquidating even the base of future struggle.

We feel in duty bound to warn our co-workers that any settlement short of Responsible Government arrived at through talks and negotiations with Durbar Virawala and which is not the result of the recommendations of the Constitution Committee formed according to the Gwyer Award will not be acceptable to us, as also, we are sure, to the Rajkot people. Let no one fall in the trap of Durbar Virawala who is giving the bait of paltry reforms with a view to rob the Rajkot people of their right to 'widest possible powers', the fulfillment of which is assured by the Viceroy.

32. Gandhi Renounces the Gwyer Award

Tribune, 19 May 1939

Rajkot
17 May 1939

When I left for Calcutta on 24th ultimo I said that Rajkot has proved a laboratory for me. The latest proof of the fact lies in the step I am now announcing. After exhaustive discussion with my co-workers I came to the conclusion this evening that I should renounce the advantages accruing from the award of the Chief Justice.

'I recognise my error. At the end of my fast, I had permitted myself to say that it has succeeded as no precious fast had done. I now see that it was tainted with himsa. In taking the fast, I sought immediate intervention of the Paramount Power so as to induce fulfillment of the promise made by the Thakore Saheb. This was not the way of ahimsa or conversion. It was the way of himsa or coercion. My fast, to be pure, should have been addressed only to the Thakore Saheb and I should have been content to die if I could not have melted his heart or rather that of his adviser, Durbar Shri Virawala.

My eyes would not have been opened if I had not found expected difficulties in my way. Durbar Shri Virawala was no willing party to the Award. Naturally, he was in no obliging mood. He therefore took advantage of every opportunity to cause a delay. The award, instead of making my way smooth, became a potent cause of angering the Muslims and Bhayats against me. Before the award we had met as friends.

Now I am accused of having committed a breach of promise, voluntarily and without any consideration made by me. The matter was to go to the Chief Justice for decision as to whether I was guilty of the alleged breach of promise. The statements of the Muslim council and the Girasias Association are before me. Now that I have taken the decision to renounce the Award, there is no occasion for me to answer the two cases.

So far as I am concerned, the Muslims and Bhayats can have anything the Thakore Saheb may be placed to give them. I must apologise to them for having put them to the trouble of preparing their cases.

I owe an apology to the Viceroy for the unnecessary strain I have put upon him in my weakness.

I apologise to the Chief Justice for having been the cause of putting him to the labour which, had I known better, he need not have gone through. Above all, I apologise to the Thakore Saheb and Durbar Shri Virawala.

So far as the latter is concerned, I must also own that, in common with my co-workers, I have harboured evil thoughts about him. I do not here pause to consider whether the charges made against him were true or not. This is not the place to discuss them. Suffice it to say that the way of ahimsa was not and had not yet been applied to him. And let it be said to my discredit that I have been guilty of playing what may be called a double game, i.e., handing the sword of the Award over his head and wooing him and expecting him of his own free will to advise the Thakore Saheb to grant liberal reforms.

This method, I admit, is wholly inconsistent with ahimsa. When all of a sudden I made what is known as a sporting offer to Mr Gibson on 19th April, I discovered my weakness. But I had not the courage then and there to say, 'I do not want to have anything to do with the Award.' Instead I said, 'Let the Thakore Saheb appoint his own Committee and then the Parishad people will examine the report in terms of the Award, and if it found defective it can go to the Chief Justice.'

Durbar Shri Virawala detected a flaw and very properly rejected the offer, saying: 'You are still hanging the Award over my head and want to become a court of appeal over the Thakore Saheb's Committee. If such is the case, you must take your pound of flesh and no more.'

I saw the force of his objection. I told him, too, that I lacked the courage then to throw the Award overboard, but I would still plead with him to come to terms with the people as if the Award was not in existence and as if the Sardar and I had also withdrawn. He promised to try. He tried in his own fashion but not with a large heart. I do not blame him. How could I expect large heart when he knew my faint-heartedness in clinging to the Award? Only trust can get trust. I lacked it myself.

But at last I have regained my lost courage. My faith in the sovereign efficacy of ahimsa burns brighter for my confession and repentance.

I must not do an injustice to my co-workers. Many of them are filled with misgivings. My exposition of ahimsa is new to them. They see no cause for my repentance. They think that I am giving up a great chance created by the Award. They think too that as a political leader I have no right to play fast and loose with the fortunes of 75,000 souls, may be of the whole of the people of Kathiawar.

I have told them that their fears are unjustified, and that every act of purification, every accession of courage, adds to the strength of the cause of a people affected by a movement of satyagraha.

I have told them, too, that if they regard me as the general and expert of satyagraha, they must put up with what may appear to them to be my vagaries.

Having now freed the Thakore Saheb and his advisor from the oppression of the Award, I have no hesitation in appealing to them to appease the people of Rajkot by fulfilling their expectations and dispelling their misgivings.

33. Inside Rajkot

Editorial, *Tribune*, 19 May 1939

18 May 1939

Nearly a week ago Mahatma Gandhi arrived at Rajkot. With his return there has been resumption of discussions but settlement seems to be as elusive as before. This is positively disappointing. What gives cause for alarm is not so much the fruitless character of the talks or the obvious attempt of the Ruler to gain time, but what is going on behind the scenes. While engaged in negotiations with Mahatma Gandhi, the authorities, it is said, have been busy mobilizing forces of reaction with a view to give the Mahatma a fight. 'All anti-Congress forces, with foremost crooked weapons,' says Sardar Patel, 'have been massed from all over India at Rajkot.' In the state itself a campaign of repression has been launched. The lands of inconvenient peasants have been confiscated, and a Press Ordinance has been promulgated with a view to curb the already abridged liberties of the press. Mahatma Gandhi is fully aware of these happenings, but if still he does not refuse to carry on negotiations with those who have done enough to injure the cause or reforms, that is because it is a tenet of Gandhian philosophy not to abandon hope lightly. A satyagrahi sees sunshine even where utter darkness prevails. 'Trust not him that has once broken faith,' says Shakespeare. But a satyagrahi believes in the inherent goodness of man and continues to repose trust even in those who have more than once shown that their word cannot be relied upon. That explains the strange mission Mahatma Gandhi has undertaken of converting hard-boiled reactionaries like Durbar Virawala to the cause of reform. This would appear a wild goose chase to an ordinary man but to a satyagrahi there is no such thing as a wild goose chase. The negotiations are not to be broken off unless every method of coming to a settlement has been exhausted. Gandhiji gave a grand opportunity to the authorities to settle the problem in any manner they liked. He readily agreed to forego the right, wrested by Sardar Patel from the unwilling hands of the Thakore Saheb for a reforms committee with a popular majority. He even advised the people to accept any reforms which the State willingly offered and which satisfied them even to some extent. But the authorities have miserably failed to rise to the occasion. Their miserly scheme of so-called reforms has not satisfied even the moderate elements in the State. Gandhiji's generosity appears to have been mistaken for weakness. But it is wrong to suppose that Mahatma Gandhi has surrendered and withdrawn from the fight. Far from that. His return to Rajkot shows that he is today as much interested in the Rajkot affairs as he was when he embarked on his historic fast...

34. Wider Reforms for Rajkot

Times of India, 19 May 1939

Rajkot
18 May 1939

Following Mr Gandhi's decision renouncing the Gwyer award, reports are current here that Mr Virawala has decided to announce reforms on broader lines than before.

It is stated that a settlement has already been reached, but official confirmation of the report is not available.

Mr Virawala called at Anand Bhawan to bid good-bye to Mr Vallabhbhai Patel, who left for Bombay by aeroplane.

Mr Mahadev Desai had a discussion with Mr Virawala for over two hours.

Following Mr Gandhi's statement, the President of the Girasiya Association has written to Mr Gandhi pressing him to submit their charge against Mr Gandhi of breach of his promise to the Bhayats for arbitration by Sir Maurice Gwyer, Chief Justice of India.

Mr Dadabhaji Valmohmed, President of the Rajkot Muslim Council, has also written to Mr Gandhi stressing the necessity of referring the question (so far as it affects the Muslims) to the Chief Justice. He maintains that the promise of reference was unconditional and hence the question of inquiry should not be shelved. The Thakore Saheb of Rajkot has issued a statement in which he observes that he appreciates very much the statement of Mr Gandhi, for it gives an entirely new orientation to the question of Indian States by advising the people of the States that their primary duty is to settle their differences directly with their Ruler in an amicable manner.

In making this statement, the Thakore declares, Mr Gandhi has shown the rare courage of confessing his error, and it will create more love and admiration for him among the people. It is a document of great importance on ahimsa, and deserves to be read, studied and digested, especially by those who handle the most difficult question of establishing a government of the people, by the people and for the people.

35. Lesson of Rajkot

Congress Socialist, 21 May 1939

21 May 1939

Mahatma Gandhi's latest statement from Rajkot will surprise many. To us, however, it sounds like a call for introspection to those who have pinned their faith blindly in the theory of 'change of heart'. Whatever interpretation one may be impelled to put on the statement, one thing stands out clear. In the struggle against entrenched autocracy and power we have to rely on our own organised strength. The statement must reassure the truism to which Gandhiji himself gave expression some time ago that the fight of the people of the Indian States is in fact a fight against the Paramount Power, i.e., British Imperialism.

But Gandhiji sought to ignore that fact. He sought the intervention of the very power behind the puny thrones of the Princes. The Gwyer Award was the result. The amount of trouble that Award has created can be deduced from the fact that Gandhiji had to renounce it. Whether it is the failure of the way of Ahimsa, in the manner in which it was pursued at Rajkot, the fact remains that the people of that State cannot hope to achieve their objective without resort to a grim struggle. And what is true of Rajkot is true of every other State. It is a mistake to interpret such concessions as we may get through precious and precarious experiments, as the outcome of a change of heart.

The successes Gandhiji has achieved so far are the result of the backing he had from the people of the country. Even in the Rajkot affair, the Paramount Power interceded because of that one reason. There was no question of change of heart; it was a matter of political expediency. Gandhiji's confession, therefore, need not surprise those who have watched the sequence of political events and have cared to analyse and understand them.

Result of Experiment

The Rajkot 'Laboratory' has given us one scientific result, though it is not a new one to those who have not been caught up in illusions. The scientific fact is that in our struggle for capture of power it is futile to look for any change of heart, in particular in those who hold that power. The path of the fighters is thus clear and that is one of relentless uncompromising struggle. When this fact is realised, it will be easy enough to decide our course of action.

That course of action lies, as we have repeatedly stressed, in resorting to direct struggle. There is no fundamental difference between the struggles of the States people and those of the people in British India. Basically they are one. The struggle is against Imperialism. The Indian States are part of that system. They are maintained to serve its ends. The order of the Princes is the relic of a decadent age. They have no place in the new age democracy and freedom. Our struggle against Imperialism will suffer from weakness if we ignore its potential allies. The Indian Princes are among such potential allies. Though they may deny with impunity the demands of their subjects they dare not lift a little finger against the behests of their imperialist masters. With Imperialism this predatory order must also go. This is the lesson of Rajkot. Let there be no mistake about it.

The Task

Let us, therefore, look to the task that confronts us vis-à-vis the struggle of the States people. The first task is to integrate that struggle with the larger struggle for National independence. How to effect such an integration is the next question that arises. The Congress at Tripuri has accepted the position that the Working Committee may intervene in suitable cases. What we need is an extension of the principle. Let there be a regular Sub-Committee of the Working Committee to handle this question. It will be the function of this Sub-Committee to coordinate the struggle in the various States and give direction. While doing this, it will also devise the machinery to relate that coordinated struggle to the struggle of the British Indian people. As has been suggested in the editorial, our War resistance campaign gives an excellent opportunity to pursue this line with assurance of success. We have no doubt that this aspect of the question will be one of the major issues that will be discussed at the meeting of the All India Congress Committee in June.

A Landmark

Gandhiji's statement should lead to a resumption of the struggles in the States where they were suspended. His declaration that henceforward the dealings should be directly between the people and the rulers must mean this. The people of the States may not wait to see the reaction of the Viceroy's speech at the Princes Chamber on the rulers of the States. The Princes will not part with their 'traditional power prestige, pomp and splendor' for the asking. They will seek to maintain them till the last. Then it is not in the interest of British Imperialism itself to have wide powers transferred to the people in the States. As that would certainly weaken its hold on them, a hold which it must retain to maintain its domination over this country. In fighting for their freedom the States people are fighting for the whole country. Rajkot has made the road clear. Gandhiji's confession will be a landmark in the history of the States people's struggles.

36. On Rajkot: Zetland to Linlithgow, 22 May 1939

Zetland Papers, Acc. No. 1969, NAI

not dated

In paragraph 4 of your letter of the 12th you warned me that the outlook at Rajkot at the time when you wrote was less favorable than it has been and that Gandhi was on his way back to renew his battle with Virawala. The outcome of his return to Rajkot has been published in the newspapers here and to me it was a most unexpected one, for Gandhi appears to have made a public apology to the world at large on the ground that he now recognizes that the great fuss of a fast unto death constituted a violation of the doctrine of Ahimsa or non-violence... I need hardly say that I have read Gandhi's letter of May 9th to you with great interest. I was rather tickled by the comparison which he drew between the Viceroy and the President of the Indian Congress—both, it would appear, saintly people actuated by the highest motives, but both constantly frustrated by their wicked and willful agents! I wonder how far his tongue was in his cheek when he added that he felt sure you would not take exception to the comparison? As for Jaipur, I confess that I should have felt happier at the prospect of seeing the Maharaja again, if before lifting his hand from Jaipur he had extinguished the Members which are clearly still smoldering in his State.

37. Rajkot Struggle

National Front, 4 June 1939*4 June 1939*

We publish below a statement issued by the Socialists and Leftist leaders of Rajkot on May 24th. Little is known to outsiders about the role played by the Socialists in the Rajkot people's movement.

It would, therefore, come as a surprise to many to learn that out of five members of the Council of Action appointed by the Praja Parishad two comrades Vajubhai Shukla who is one of the oldest political workers of Kathiawar and a member of the Gujarat Provincial Congress Committee and Comrade Esmail Hirani, the leader of Rajkot Yuvak Sangh are Socialists and Becharbhai Vadher is a Leftist. Comrade Jatashanker is a young Socialist leader under the leadership of Comrade Vajubhai Shukla. It was the Socialists and Leftists who initiated the popular movement at Rajkot and took a leading part in the general struggle that developed subsequently under the united leadership of the Praja Parishad guided by Sardar Patel.

We whole heartedly endorse the stand taken by our Comrades in the following statement. If the popular movement is not to go to pieces as a result of recent developments, if demoralization and disintegration are to be checked, it is urgently necessary to convene the Praja Parishad, reorganize it and define the people's attitude towards the 'Reforms' Committee.

We have carefully studied the Thakore Saheb's announcement of the personnel at the Reforms Committee and the consequent events. Our fears have unfortunately proved quite true, and Gandhiji's tearing off the Gwyer award and relieving the Viceroy and the State of their responsibilities thereof has resulted in strengthening the hands of the autocracy and reaction. This has emboldened them to foist an anti-people's and pro-Virawala Committee upon the people of Rajkot. Change of heart of Dr Virawala is as far off as before May. It has been abundantly proved by day to day events that to talk of Virawala's conversion is nothing else but self-deception.

Just as this Committee is a creature of Durbar Virawala which cannot dare to speak or even dream things which are not approved by him, in the same way its report will be equally a creature of his. People of Rajkot who have fought brave struggles for the achievement of Responsible

Government and have made numerous sacrifices cannot have anything to do with this 'Virawala Committee.' That Committee only can be acceptable to the people of Rajkot which is approved by their Parishad and not one which is foisted upon them with a view to perpetuate their slavery and crush their aspirations. To cooperate with this Committee is to cooperate in forging our own shackles. We can never be a party to this conspiracy, which aims at robbing us of all fruits of struggle and ruining us. The only honourable course open to the people of Rajkot is that of boycotting this anti-people's 'Virawala Committee' in very respect.

We honestly believe and frankly say that Mahatmaji's advice to the people to cooperate with this Committee is fraught with grave dangers, and will ultimately result in great demoralization and utter disintegration of the people. If we are not going to add complete ruin to the present tragedy and humiliation, the present futile line of wooing Durbar Virawala and thereby trying to obtain his conversion must be immediately abandoned.

The only solution of the present complicated and worsening situation, as it seems to us, is to convene the second session of the Parishad, and convene it immediately. Let people themselves decide whether they want to boycott this Committee or to cooperate with it. The verdict of the Parishad will be binding on all on the left as well as on the right. We solemnly declare that to us the Parishad's considered majority opinion will be the final word.

Not only this, other important issues also require immediate attention. We are still far, far away from Responsible Government—our sacred and much beloved goal. We shall have to find out ways and means to proceed further in this direction and build the whole public life anew. We have to build our organisation, the Parishad, on such a sound and solid base as to make it a strong weapon for achieving Responsible Government. Moreover a definite lead must be given to the people in day-to-day occurrences. In grave and critical moments such as the present, it is really a pity that more or less complete anarchy prevails in the popular camp, and no organisation worth the name reflecting the people's will, is existing. Therefore, more we appeal to our co-workers, U. Dhebar¹ and others, to move immediately in this direction and prepare for convening second session of the Parishad.

Vajubhai Shukla
Esmail Hirani
Becharbhai Vadher
Jata Shankar Mehta

¹ U. Dhebar, local satyagrahi leader; Gandhi wanted him to be chairman of committee.

38. Gandhi on Rajkot Reforms

Harijan, 25 November 1939, CWMG, Vol 70, pp. 366–67

Allahabad
20 November 1939

Having once offended, however unwittingly, the Thakore Saheb of Rajkot and Durbar Shri Virawala, I have retained myself against saying anything by way of criticism of the Durbar's doings in the State. But duty to the people of Rajkot who have shown exemplary discipline demands a word from me on the reforms just announced. They expect me to give my opinion on them. It pains me to have to say that they have undone what the late Thakore Saheb had done. The adult franchise, which was the late Thakore Saheb's boon lasting 15 years has been revoked, and it has been reduced to the possession of property qualifications and stiff residential test. The elected

President gives place to the Dewan as permanent President. The original Sabha which was wholly composed of elected representatives is to contain 40 elected members against 20 nominated. The elected members will be sub-divided into minorities. The so-called majority will thus become really a minority. The natural course of reforms is progressive increase of popular control. Here without the slightest justification popular control has been materially reduced. The original Sabha had wide powers of legislation. These have been curtailed.

There was a definite announcement that the privy purse was to be fixed. The reforms ignore the announcement. The Notification of December 26th last was to transfer to the people 'the widest powers possible'. My reading of them leads me to the conclusion that not only have the powers already possessed by the people been taken away but they have been limited as much as possible. In one word, the Thakore Saheb's, i.e., the Dewan's will is to be the Supreme Law in Rajkot.

I am sorry to have to write these lines. I do not know whether these reforms are the last act of the tragedy for which my violence is responsible. A fast is a remedy to be applied only by an expert. It interrupts the even course of a movement for better. The slightest touch of violence damages it. I have admitted that my appeal to the Viceroy against the acts of the Thakore Saheb whilst the fast was pending was violence that vitiated the fast. I had thought that I had paid the penalty by repentance, and that the happy relations established between the Thakore Saheb and Durbar Shri Virawala and me would open a new and bright chapter for the people of Rajkot. The durbar held in my honour after my public repentance seemed to have set the seal on the good that the repentance had done. I see I was mistaken. Men's natures are not changed in a moment. I apologise to the people of Rajkot.

But I do not repent of my repentance. I am quite sure that what was morally right was also politically right. My repentance saved the people from a worse fate. It averted a communal clash. I am quite sure that in the end the people of Rajkot will come to their own. Meanwhile the evil that the reforms in my opinion are, must be allowed to work itself out. Those citizens of Rajkot who have any sense of self-respect must abstain from cooperation in working them. They will, if they take my advice, watch, wait, pray and literally spin. They will find that they will be also spanners of real liberty in Rajkot in the non-violent way which is the only true way.

Limbdi

1. Vallabhbhai Patel's statement on Limbdi affairs

Hindustan Times, 10 February 1939

Bombay
9 February 1939

Shocking news has been received from Limbdi State¹ in Kathiawar which I have no reason to disbelieve, as it has been sent by reliable workers of the Praja Mandal, who were sent by me, after proper investigation.

Soon after the Rajkot settlement² broke down, all Kathiawar Princes met at the Rajkot Residency³ at the invitation of the Resident, and they seem to have there decided upon a common policy of suppressing Praja Mandals in their respective States. Repressive measures of different forms have been taken in several States from the time. Minorities such as Muslims, Girasias, Bhayats etc. have been set up against Praja Mandals and they have been incited to obstruct and break the popular movement and the demand for Responsible Government.

With the breach of the solemn agreement at Rajkot by the Thakore at the instigation of the Resident, a regular reign of terror and frightfulness has commenced. But Limbdi has improved upon Rajkot methods of barbarism and brutality. Eighty people armed with guns, swords, dharias and knives fell upon Praja Mandal workers in several villages, brutally assaulted some people, fired at some houses, looted property worth thousands of rupees and carried it away in several motor cars which they brought with them. Some of these raiders were identified as State servants and their having such a fleet of motor cars at their disposal is also suggestive of the sources from which they got the aid.

If reports are true, there is no safety of person or property in Limbdi State. No steps have been taken nor has the Thakore bestirred himself in the matter. About three thousand State subjects are on hunger-strike as a protest against the attitude of the Thakore in front of the palace since the last 48 hours¹. Telegrams have been sent to the Viceroy and Mahatma Gandhi by the people.

Even if these facts are partially believed, there is no doubt that an organised attempt is being made to crush the Praja Mandal by imposing upon them methods adopted else-where. I wonder if the British resident who is anxious to protect these autocratic relics of a barbaric age feels any responsibility to protect these unarmed people. Is this not what Gandhiji calls organised goondaism? Is it expected that the Congress Governments in the neighbouring provinces should only be unconcerned spectators?

Limbdi is one of the States of the Western India Agency, with an area of 34,396 square miles and a population of 40,000. Its annual average revenue including Barvala territory is stated to be about Rs 913,000. The police force of the State number 167 while the troops number 31 cavalry and 32 infantry.

¹ Limbdi is one of the western Indian States enjoying full powers of internal sovereignty. Maharana Shri Manguj was founder of Limbdi house. Limbdi was one of the original independent houses of the Thala dynasty.

² After the Satyagraha launched by the Praja Parishad had continued for months, the ruler of Rajkot signed on 26 December 1938 a draft compromise with Vallabhbhai Patel agreeing to appoint a representative committee for introducing Responsible Government. The ruler having failed to introduce reforms the Satyagraha was resumed and Kasturba Gandhi was arrested on 3 February 1939 while entering the State for offering Satyagraha.

³ The princes of Kathiawar states and their Ministers met in a conference in Jamnagar House, Rajkot, under the Presidentship of the Jain Saheb of Nawanagar. The discussion centered around the recent proposals of the President for a common police force and a common High Court for the smaller States.

⁴ See *CWMG*, Vol. 68, pp. 435-36

2. Hundreds Migrating from State

Bombay Chronicle, 28 February 1939

Wadhwan Camp
24 February 1939

People of Limbdi have, in consultation with Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and Durbar Saheb Gopaldas¹ decided to migrate as a protest against the repression through Goondas.² In the last three days about 3,000 people have left Limbdi for various places from where they propose to go to Arnel where a new colony is being built. The Praja Mandal has also launched a programme of economic boycott of Limbdi State which is having a telling effect. Two agents of the State who went to Wardha Camp, Wadhwan City, Viramgam and Chuda to buy grain could not buy anything.

¹ Durbar Gopaldas Desai (1887-1951); ruler of a small principality consisting of Dhasa Rajasanhali and Vaso; educated in a Primary School at Caso; Baroda College 1907-11; deeply influenced by Gandhi; sympathized with National and

Quit India Movement; active organizer of State People's Movement of Baroda, Limbdi and Rajkot; presided over Praja Mandal conferences; after 1947 helped to bring in small states of Kathiawar and Gujarat within union of Saurashtra.

² On 19 February 1939, organised attacks inspired by the State authorities were made on the office of the Praja Mandal and the houses of the workers. See also *CWMG*, Vol. 68, pp. 434-37, See below 'Limbdi' shows the line-up, 26 February 1939.

3. Limbdi shows the line-up

By Shantilal Shah, *Congress Socialist*, 26 February 1939

26 February 1939

Limbdi at present appears to have overshadowed the movements in the other Indian States of Kathiawar. There is a very good ground for this. In order to crush the Praja Mandal and the freedom movement the Limbdi State has adopted methods of unique frightfulness and unprecedented in atrociousness.

Limbdi is a small state in Kathiawar, having a territory of about 250 sq. miles and a population of about 40,000. It has only one town viz., Limbdi and about 40 villages. Its annual income is about Rs 800,000 of which more than 90 per cent is derived from the villages, principally land revenue. A 50 per cent of this income is swallowed up in the expenses of the Royal family.

The movement in Limbdi is very recent. While the Rajkot struggle was going on in December last, prominent citizens of Limbdi resident in Bombay met the Yuvaraj¹ and expressed at their desire to educate the people to take part in the administration. The Yuvaraj stated that he welcomed such efforts and that he would render assistance and give his cars to go to the villages. During Christmas the people at Limbdi took steps to establish the Praja Mandal. At the invitation of the Yuvaraj, the leaders met him and they were surprised at a complete change of front on his part.² The Yuvaraj himself has devised a scheme the essence of which was to divide the city from the village and one community from another. He was adamant that the Praja Mandal workers should under no circumstances go to the villages. He professed concern for the villages and wanted powers to work his scheme. Further discussion therefore was useless and the Praja Mandal was established.

The Yuvaraj and his younger brother who is the Dewan³ pretended that they did not desire to restrict the civil liberties of the people. The States did not put a legal ban on Praja Mandal or its activities. Instead it resorted to organised goondaism to suppress the movement. Here again its methods were novel.

The State encouraged its officers to start a rival organisation which was called Sanatan Mandal. Almost all officers of this Mandal are State Officers or State dependants. The State rendered this Mandal all assistance to oppose the activities of the Praja Mandal by openly violent methods.

In the villages the State employed hirelings to frighten the people from joining the Praja Mandal. These State's hirelings assisted by State officers openly intimidated, abused and assaulted all those who worked for, became members of or sympathizers with the Praja Mandal. It is so easy in small villages to harass and persecute the villagers in many ways. These hirelings were freely let loose to intimidate the villagers.⁴

These methods of frightfulness, however, failed to repress the people. The State, therefore, went a step further. About 80 persons fully armed with guns, swords, dharias, etc. committed dacoities at midnight in two of the villages, attacked, seriously injured and robbed the Praja Mandal workers. The evidence leaves no doubt that the dacoities were a part of the conspiracy of the State to crush the movement. Other villages were openly threatened with dacoities and well-known dacoits freely moved in the villages carrying arms, intimidating and threatening. Thefts and dacoities in the villages of all Praja Mandal workers and sympathizers became common.

The people and the Praja Mandal workers were however undaunted. They determined to hold the Praja Parishad on 19th February under the Presidentship of Durbar Gopaldas. Along with these methods of frightfulness the State also tried the policy of divide and rule. These methods failed.

The State therefore organised all its forces to break the Parishad at any cost. It had not the courage to give a straight fight. It collected its hirelings and goondas under the banner of Sanatan Mandal. The Dewan had the audacity to issue a communique three or four days before the Parishad stating the State will not be responsible for any untoward consequences if the Parishad were held. He thus gave a license to the State hirelings and goondas to commit breach of peace. The so called Sanatan Mandal collected about 700 to 800 persons amongst whom were many petty state servants and dependants of the State. The higher officials of the State openly organised and directed the activities of this crowd. All these rowdies were collected in Limbdi city on the 18th. They were armed with swords, dharias, knives and lathis... It was obvious that a serious trouble was ahead, but the State took no step to control the situation.

On the evening of the 18th February in spite of all efforts of the State to prevent the villagers from coming to the city to attend the Parishad thousands flocked to Limbdi and put up at the camps of the Praja Mandal. The rowdies were freely moving in the city carrying weapons. Many of these persons had put up at State's uttaras and enjoyed State's hospitality. In the evening of the 18th the procession organised by Praja Mandal were attacked by these rowdies and a few persons were injured. All night the situation was very grave. The President-elect reached Limbdi at 2 o'clock at night and was violently prevented by the rowdies from entering the city until 7 a.m. Since morning the rowdies besieged the residence of the President and prevented him from moving out the whole night, the camps of the Parishad were surrounded by these persons who abused and assaulted the villagers who had come to attend the Parishad.

In the morning the State issued an order prohibiting carrying of arms that was only a show. These hirelings openly carried arms and no effort was made to disarm them or to round them up. The Parishad was to take place at 2 p.m. At about 11 a.m. all the camps of the Parishad and places where it was to take place were simultaneously attacked. The goondas climbed over the walls and furiously attacked the persons within who were prevented from going out. More than 600 persons were injured, some of them very seriously. Julianwalla was repeated. The Parishad mandap was smashed and a reign of terror prevailed. The stream of wounded at hospitals was endless. The workers of the Parishad at the risk of their lives attended to the wounded. The writer was an eyewitness to these scenes.

The State had abdicated in favour of the goondas. The police had almost disappeared. The ruler and other higher officials kept behind the screens. Not a single arrest was made. There was complete anarchy and no safety of person or property.

The State wanted to create an appearance as if it was a fight between two sections of the people, one for and one against the Parishad. But the conspiracy was completely exposed. An attempt was made to fabricate evidence of hospital records to show that some of the so-called Sanatanis were also injured. Several respectable persons were witness to the fact that these records were false.

In spite of these atrocities the Parishad was held in another place at the appointed time under the Presidentship of Mrs Lilavati Munshi,⁵ MLA as the President-elect was prevented from moving out.

There is no safety left of persons or property in Limbdi State. Thousands have left the State and many more are preparing to leave. The leaders of the movement, who are leading and respectable citizens of Limbdi, each of them owning properties worth thousands, are determined

to carry on the struggle. One cannot but admire the exemplary non-violence of the people under such extremely provoking circumstances.

The atrocities of Limbdi cry for a thorough impartial investigation. Under any other circumstances the Limbdi ruler would have been deposed long ago, but one does not expect the Paramount Power at present to do its duty by the people of Limbdi! The people must stand on their own strength and that of the Congress which is the real Paramount Power of the people.

¹ Shri Digvijaysinha, Yuvaraj of Limbdi belonged to Jhala clan; married to Nandkunvarba, daughter of Maharaja of Idar.

² See also, 'Lawless Limbdi', *Haryan*, 25 February 1939.

³ Rajkumar Shri Fateh Singhji, b. 1900; educated at Rajkumar college, Rajkot; Peterhouse, Cambridge; Inner temple, London; LLB, in 1922; appointed Dewan of Limbdi in 1924; introduced many reforms like wholly elected Municipality and abolition of child marriage.

⁴ See above Vallabhbhai Patel's statement on Limbdi affairs, 9 February 1939.

⁵ Lilavati Munshi, b. 1900, education: at a convent at Panchgani near Bombay; married at age of 14 to Lalbhai Trkamal Sheth; second marriage in 1926 with K M. Munshi; took part in Salt Satyagraha and courted arrest in 1932 and 1940; member Maharashtra Pradesh Congress Committee, All India Congress Committee, 1931-34; President, Harijan Sevak Sangh, Bombay, Member, Bombay Legislative Assembly, 1936-52; President, Bombay Women's Association 1947-48; author of noteworthy contributions in Eiyrate Literature.

4. On Limbdi

Weekly Confidential Report of the DM, Ahmedabad, Home Department, (Sp), 917(1), 1939, NAI

2 March 1939

On 20 February 1939, a public meeting of 2000 persons was held at Ahmedabad under the auspices of the City Congress Committee, Manilal Chaturbhai Shah presiding. He referred to the unprovoked and deliberate assaults made at Limbdi on 19th February 1939 on about 7000 persons who had assembled to attend the Parishad, and said that about 600-700 persons were injured; that the assailants consisted of 2 groups of goondas, one wearing a red strap and the other green, and had the support of the Thakore; that the situation at Limbdi resembled that of Ahmedabad in April 1919 riots.

Arjun Lala¹ referring to it said that the scene of indiscriminate lathi charges on men and women were so inhuman as to move any heart and appealed to the audience to help the State people with men and money.

A resolution protesting against the goondaism at Limbdi, congratulating the sufferers and assuring them of Ahmedabad's sympathy and co-operation with them and warning the Limbdi Thakore against goondaism was passed in this meeting.

The President,² Ahmedabad City Congress Committee, issued a press note in the Gujarat Samachar asking the public not to sell food stuffs to two Agents of Limbdi who were alleged to have arrived here to make purchases.

Protest meetings were held at Barwala and Dhandhuka under the auspices of the Congress Committee against Limbdi atrocities on 20th and 21st February. A partial hartal was observed at Barwala on 21st February. Due to the alleged repression at Limbdi and its villages are migrating to Arnej a village in Dholka Taluka. The Congress Committee of Dholka and the people of Arnej are

making arrangements to receive them and house them, erecting temporary huts. Necessary police arrangements are being made for their protection.

¹ Arjun Lala—Secretary, Ahmedabad District Congress Committee.

² Jhivanla Dewan, President, City Congress Committee, Ahmedabad.

5. On Limbdi

Weekly Confidential Report of the DM, Ahmedabad, Home Department, (Sp), 917(1), 1939, NAI

9 March 1939

About 150 emigrants from the Limbdi State have arrived at Arnej and encamped in Dharamshalas. Temporary cottages will be built for them near the temple of the 'Butmata'. The first batch was given a public reception by Durbar Gopaldas and the Secretary of the Dholka Taluka Congress Samiti. Suitable Police arrangements have been made for their protection. The local Congress circles expect about 1000 emigrants from Limbdi.

The incidents of February 19th at Limbdi are having their reactions in the adjoining British limits. At a public meeting of about 700 people held at Ranpur on 25th February, a resolution was passed boycotting the products of the Limbdi and Vithalgadh States. They have further resolved that no businessman should have any dealings with Limbdi except on the recommendation of the Praja Mandal. The Limbdi State Praja Mandal has also issued leaflets exhorting the subjects of the State to emigrate to the adjoining British limits and exhorting the British India people to boycott the State.

The Muslim Jamat of Limbdi has issued leaflets and distributed them in Dhandhuka denying the allegations of having participated in the incidents of February 19th at Limbdi and drawing attention to the Press propaganda against the Jamat.

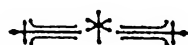
6. Disturbances in Limbdi State

Extracts from Report No. 35 of 31 March 1939 from Governor of Bombay, Crown Representative Records, Roll No. 118, NAI

31 March 1939

... Much more attention has been given to the recent occurrences of Limbdi State. Ministers are showing interest in this particularly since Mrs Munshi visited and presided over the Praja Mandal Conference which was held after some disturbances. The situation about Limbdi looks like being further complicated by the fact that emigration from the States into the adjoining district of this Province has just begun. It does not appear to have reached any large scale upto the present. I must confess I find it difficult to understand what is happening in Limbdi. It looks as if the State authorities have organised a counter attack upon the Praja Mandal but the 'beating up' methods which they employ are difficult to defend and I should view a recurrence of these methods with some anxiety.

I hear that trading communities in the bazaars of Bombay city, which are always interested in the agitation in the Kathiawar States, now anticipate that Gandhi's pilgrimage to Rajkot foreshadows in early settlement of the issue.



7. Attempt to Divide and Rule

Bombay Chronicle, 5 April 1939

5 April 1939

In the course their reply to State Communique, the Limbdi Praja Mandal state:

The Limbdi State has announced the appointment of an advisory committee of 11 persons, 6 of whom are said to be elected by the so-called Sanatani Sabha and 5 are nominated by the State. This committee is expected to advise the State as to the method of forming a City Council, which it is said, will be entrusted with the municipal administration of Limbdi City.

One has only to read this communiqué to be satisfied that it is a worthless document. It may furnish an excuse to the propagandists of the State to say that the stage is set in Limbdi for reforms, and that further agitation is unnecessary. It will, however, deceive none.

Not only there is no attempt to part with any power, but there is not even a promise to do so. The communiqué is as vague as it possibly can be. It is all in the realm of intention and consideration. The so-called committee and conference are to advise as to how to form a City Council and how to proceed to draft a constitution. And then?

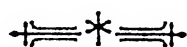
The constitution of the so-called committee and the proposed conference are nothing short of a fraud upon the people of Limbdi. On the 11 persons as the City Advisory Council, 6 are nominees of the Sanatani Sabha and 5 are nominated by the State. These so-called Sanatanists of Limbdi are now well-known. The Sanatani Sabha is a creature of the State. More than half the population of Limbdi has left the City, but that does not come in the way of forming this council. The Sanatanists are there. The proposed conference is to consist of these 11 persons 11 nominees of village Panchayats. There are no genuine village Panchayats in any village of Limbdi. The State has set up such bodies in some villages. They are like the Aman Sabhas of Non-Cooperation days set up in British India, groups of persons who are loyalists for one reason or another. The communiqué mentions the villages that are the nominated. This purposely excludes important villages which are in the forefront of the fight for freedom. As if this were not enough, the State is to nominate 6 more persons to represent special interests such as Bhayats and Garasias. The Praja Mandal of course finds no place. It cannot even be mentioned. The State knows of no such body, nor of the fact that half the population of Limbdi has left the City.

These measures are said to be an earnest of the Ruler's intention to foster progress and to leave no excuse for continuing the agitation.

The truth is that the Yuvaraj of Limbdi has formulated a scheme to divide the City from the villages and one community from another, and he is determined to foist this scheme upon the people. That is his idea of a constitution suited to the natural genius of the people. The Praja Mandal rejected this scheme from the beginning, based as it was on a policy of divide and rule.

There is no promise to reduce the taxes crushing the people, nor any promise to reduce the expenses of the Royal family which absorb more than 50 per cent of the revenues of the State.

The Praja Mandal, therefore, considers this declaration by the State entirely useless and a further attempt by the State to divide and rule. The concessions said to have been granted by the State are granted only to Garasias of Rangpur to win them over.



8. Disturbance in Limbdi State

Letter from Fateh Singh to Resident, 16 April 1939, Crown Representative Records, Roll No. 118, NAI

16 April 1939

My dear Sir,

As I told you in Rajkot the Banias who number about four thousand, have left Limbdi and are still out. Some have come in and some have remained all the time but most of them have gone. About 4 or 500 others, mostly artisans have also left, but none of them is missed and everything is smooth and quiet here. About half a dozen villagers have also been buried out but only one of them is a 'cultivating tenant' (one who holds more than 16 acres of darbari land) and he is heavily indebted to the State.

From outside, the Banias have declared a boycott of the people and State of Limbdi. They do not allow any supplies including food stuffs to be imported into the State openly. Thanks however to the Jam Sahib principally we are able to get necessities. We are also able to buy things from other places surreptitiously but we have to pay higher prices owing to the subterranean means and also due to a certain amount of blackmail. The rulers of States that met at Rajkot on the 6th have promised to help.

The second form of this boycott which is more serious, is that they have boycotted the cotton crop, both of the State and the people of Limbdi. They have frightened even all the English firms into observing the boycott and so we are not able to sell any cotton in Bombay or Ahmedabad markets.

The latest development is that my father has received a letter from Mr Gandhi offering his help. The letter was brought by a merchant of Bhavnagar and Amritrai Pattani's¹ younger brother. My father has politely declined the proffered help after consulting the people here. The people are determined not to let Gandhi come here. They intend warning him, if he insists on That if he comes they will resist his entry at all costs even if it leads to breach of the peace.

¹ Anantarai Pattani, b. 1888; education in England at Uxstree, Harrow and Cambridge; Controller of State Accounts; tutor to the Maharaja, 1920; Member, State Council, 1933, Dewan Bhavnagar State since 1937.

9. Reign of Terror in Limbdi State

Bombay Chronicle, 18 May 1939

18 May 1939

The Limbdi Praja Mandal has issued the following statement:

A reign of terror prevails in Limbdi State.

Following the atrocities in Limbdi City on 19th February the day of which the Praja Parishad was held, when about 800 persons were injured by hooligans and not a single arrest was made—there has been no safety of person or property. 6,000 people have migrated from Limbdi City out of a population of 10,000. About 750 peasants have left the villages. Prior to 19th February there was a large number of dacoities and thefts in the villages. Now there are forfeitures galore.

The wrath of the State has descended on all those who are or are suspected to be, members of or sympathizing with the Praja Mandal and in particular on the mercantile community, which is foremost in the fight. Amongst the 6,000 persons that have migrated from the Limbdi City, a very large number consists of merchants who have left behind their properties and goods worth lakhs

of rupees. The State has singled out the mercantile community for special attention because it leads the fight. Here are some of the measures adopted by the State.

1. The State has imposed a heavy export duty of one anna per rupee to prevent the persons who have migrated from removing their goods. Those that desire to remove their goods even after payment of such heavy duty are not allowed to do so. They are refused permit and are molested when they go to Limbdi.

2. The State has dismissed all servants belonging to the mercantile community who have been in service for years and have employed Garasias, Brahmins or Muslims.

3. The State has allowed it to be understood that debts due to the merchants need not be paid.

4. Properties of persons who have migrated are attached and sold away for debts alleged to be due to the State years ago and long forgotten.

5. The merchants in the villages who have not left are called individually and asked to leave the state and their properties are put under seal. Those that do not leave within 24 hours after notice are forcibly removed. A large number of poor petty merchants have thus been compelled to leave and their properties have been attached.

6. Anyone assisting or suspected of assisting the Praja Mandal workers or its activity is at once called and warned to desist and if he or she fails to obey forth with immediate order to leave the State follows.

A barber, for example, who shaved a Praja Mandal worker and female cook who cooked at the Praja Mandal kitchen, were asked to leave the State.

Several teachers in the school suspected of sympathizing with the Praja Mandal have been dismissed.

Peasants sympathizing or suspected of sympathizing with the Praja Mandal are compelled to leave the State leaving their lands and houses and even the crop of the season.

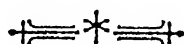
7. A number of merchants own land, the tenancy being, what is called *Chavhak*, technically a tenancy-at-will but held for generations and treated as permanent. The State has confiscated such lands of the merchants and refused to permit them to take the crop even of this season which is ready.

8. The peasantry, groaning under heavy taxation, is as everywhere in India ignorant and illiterate. The peasants are terrorized by petty officials of the State in many ways and are compelled on pain of personal injury and forfeiture of property to sign loyalty pledges and other writings purporting to disown the Praja Mandal, and its activities. Even so, hundreds have left leaving their lands and the crop of the season. The villagers are seeing things with discontent. With the removal and ruin of the only class (merchants) that could stand up to the State, repression over the peasantry has increased considerably.

9. All this terrorism and repression goes on without any formal orders or notification or even enquiry. The officials, high as well as low, have the fullest liberty to do what they like to carry out this policy. There is no appeal to any one.

10. False rumours are spread and threats are held out that those who have migrated will be compelled to surrender. They have been threatened with forfeiture of all their property and the properties of some have already been forfeited.

All these efforts, however, have proved fruitless. At a meeting of these emigrants held under the Presidentship of Durbar Gopaldas, it was unanimously resolved, on a vote by ballot, to continue the fight until there is an honourable settlement.



10. Gangsterism in Limbdi

Message to the people of Limbdi, Bombay, 22 June 1939, *SWJN*, Vol. 9, p. 443

22 June 1939

Limbdi has become symbolic of a new technique on the part of some of the rulers. It is a technique which is spreading in Kathiawar and elsewhere. This is a technique of the States encouraging gangsterism, dacoity and brutal violence by private individuals or hirelings on the people who are engaged in the States People's struggle. This behaviour is bad enough at any time or anywhere. Where it occurs, it is a sure sign of the utter incompetence and bankruptcy of the State authorities. Where a State cannot stop this it has ceased to function and has lost all claim to the cooperation or allegiance of its people.

But what shall we say to the state which itself encourages this disgusting brutality and goondaism? What shall we say of Limbdi which has exhibited this?

We have much to say and words are feeble vehicles for our thoughts. But we shall say it in other and more effective ways when the time comes. Let no man imagine that violence and gangsterism will suppress a people's movement.

I send my greetings to the people of Limbdi, and I want to assure them and all the people of the States that in spite of the present-day sorrow and distress, the future is theirs, and for that future, we have to work, and will work with all determination and confidence.

11. Gandhi in Limbdi

CWMG, Vol. 70, pp. 144-45

Segaon

31 August 1949

Though I have had protracted correspondence with the Limbdi people, I have refrained for a long time from saying anything about their woes. My silence was due to the hope that those who were trying to bring about peace between the ruler and the people would succeed. But it was a vain hope. Much has happened since the beginning stages of that struggle. Perhaps nowhere has the policy of ruthlessness been pursued with so much precision and persistence as in Limbdi. If the reports received by me are to be believed, and I have no reason to disbelieve them, the peasants have been hunted out of their homes. The heaviest blow has been aimed at the hated Bania who was at one time the State's friend, favourite and main supporter. But he was to be crushed because he dared to think and talk of Responsible Government, dared to go amongst the peasantry and tell them what was due to them and how they could get it. The shops and houses of these merchants who have performed hijrat¹ are practically looted. I cannot use any other term. There has not even been, so far as I know, any legal formality observed. The will of the administrator of the policy of ruthlessness is law, supreme law. The idea is to terrorise the people into subjection. No wonder some have weakened. I would advise those who are in charge of the movement not to try to keep them from surrendering. Of course they should be told what is in store for them. But there are people who prize possessions before honour. They can only be a burden on a freedom movement. Freedom is always won by a few brave self-sacrificing souls who will stake everything for the sake of honour. Those who understand the value and the necessity of sacrifice, whether they are few or many, should feel glad that their possessions in Limbdi have been taken away. They should not live in suspense nor entertain any hope of immediate settlement. They should engage in healthy pursuits outside the state, always in the firm faith that a day must come when

the people of Limbdi will come into their own. When that day comes, as it must, it will have come because of the sacrifice and the bravery of those who will have refused to bend before repression, however severe. Let them remember these immortal words that possession is a vice and poverty a virtue in a tyrannical state.

So much of reliable evidence before me. But should Limbdi be a tyrannical State? If there is exaggeration in the statements made to me, let the State authorities send me a contradiction. I would gladly publish it. Better still will be an impartial judicial inquiry into the allegations made, if they are disputed. I wish to make a public appeal to the Thakore Saheb of Limbdi. I have the privilege of knowing him. I have enjoyed his hospitality. He has the reputation of being a pious, God-fearing man. It is not right that there should be this estrangement between him and his people, some of whom are well-known people with a reputation to lose and a stake in Limbdi. It would be wrong to regard them all as a discontented lot. They have no axes to grind. They have no earthly gain to make by ranging themselves against the State. They have incurred much material loss by becoming exiles from their own home. A wise ruler will think fifty times before facing the discontent of such people. He will conclude from it that there must be misrule and injustice on the part of his officials. He will summon the discontented people, listen to their complaints and pacify them. The Thakore Saheb has not adopted that course. It is not too late for him to do so even now².

Those who have migrated

· David Henry Thoreau, 1817–62, American Writer; School Master in Concord 1838–41, retired to a hut besides Walden Pond at Concord where he devoted himself to a study of nature and to writing; published two books, *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack rivers* and *Walden*.

Kathiawar, Palanpur and Junagarh

1. Agitation in Western Indian States Agency

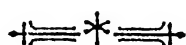
Report on agitation in the Western Kathiawar State, February 1939, Reel No. 117, Crown Representative Records, NAI

February 1939

In almost every State and Taluka of this Agency including those under management, cultivators are demanding reduction of taxation. The peasants are encouraged in this attitude by Congress workers who visit the villages from Amreli and Rajkot etc. Demands are confined solely to taxation relief and I have heard of no demands for constitutional changes. The peasants are in fact apathetic. They take no interest in the political aspect of the demands being made in large states but encouraged by professional agitators, seek to derive benefit from the generally disturbed situation in the important states.

Bajana

Some of the cultivators of Bajana have organised a 'Prajamandal' with the objective of putting forward their demands.



2. Kathiawar Prince's Bid to retain all power

Bombay Sentinel, 13 February 1939

13 February

A conference of Kathiawar Ruling Princes was held at the Palitana Guest House at Rajkot last week at which the following draft of constitutional reforms in the States was adopted.

Legislative Reforms

A Representative Council or Assembly should be established representing all interests in the State so far as possible according to the peculiar circumstances of each State composed of two-thirds elected members and one-third nominated members. The President of this Assembly will be elected by it from amongst its members.

The various departments of the States will be divided into the following:

- (1) Transferred
- (2) Reserved
- (3) Transferable at a future date according to the capacity of the people to digest the reforms

The following will be transferred subjects: (1) Education (2) Municipality (3) Medical Relief and (4) Commerce and Industry (where practicable).

The following will be reserved subjects: (1) Ruling Family, (2) Foreign and Political, (3) Military and Police, (4) Treaties and Engagements, (5) Finance (without Budget) and (6) Expense relating to Social Courtesy (Rajyakharacha Vyavharik).

The rest will be transferable subjects.

Legislative Powers

The House will be competent to legislate on all matters relating to transferred subjects subject to His Highness's assent and power of veto.

In regard to all other subjects the House will function as an advisory body with the right to discuss and ask questions.

The Budget will be put before the House for discussions but will be votable on transferred heads subject to the right of the ruler to sanction and veto.

Executive for Transferred Subjects

There will be a paid minister who will be elected by the House from its members to be in executive charge of Transferred subjects. He will work under the general direction of a 'ministry' consisting of himself and an officer of the State as Members and the President of the Legislative Body as Chairman. Orders of the Ministry will be subjects to His Highness, right to veto.

Details about the member in the Representative Assembly etc., should be worked out in accordance with the peculiar conditions of every individual State.

Note: Reserved and Transferred subjects to vary according to the capacity of the people in individual states to work out the reforms.

2. Administrative Reforms

- (a) Privy Purse to be fixed,
- (b) Agricultural grievances to be redressed,
- (c) Veth

3. Inter State Cooperation

- (a) Cooperation to be given only if the above reforms are introduced.
- (b) In the event of trouble to detail those of their subjects when sent back by the State in which trouble exists.
- (c) To help with men and material.
- (d) In case of over flow of detenues they would be kept at the expense of the State sending them according to the of each State.
- (e) To approach Government for cooperation.
- (f) Government should allow for action to be taken or take action themselves to present in Railway limits through any state and stop issuing tickets, etc. for all states concerned.

3. Palanpur State Affairs

Home Department (Spl.), File No. 917(1), 1939, NAI

Bombay

15 February 1939

The Palanpur Rajya Praja Sangh, Bombay, held a public meeting at Hira Baug on 14th February. Nagandas T. Master presided over an audience of about 200 persons.

The President, Dahyabhai Mehta (Secretary of the Palanpur Praja Mandal, Palanpur), Maneklal Gandhi,¹ Waman Rao Mukadam² and Ratilal Kothari (Secretary of the Palanpur Praja sangh, Bombay.) made speeches.

Dahyabhai Mehta, the principal speaker, pointed out that the administration of the State was vitiated by instances of injustice, corruption, inefficiency and excesses on the part of revenue and police officials. The Praja Mandal had, therefore, decided to agitate for Responsible Government.

The other speakers stressed the importance of agitating for Responsible Government and exhorted the people to contribute their mite towards assisting the struggle of the people.

¹ Maneklal Gandhi, MLA and President Idar State Praja Mandal

² Waman Mukadam, MLA from Panch Mohalla. See *Bombay Chronicle*, 17 February.

4 Fortnightly Report, Western Indian States, First half of January 1939

Fortnightly Report, Western Indian States, Rajkot, Junagarh, Nawanagar, Bhavnagar, Dhrangandra, Palitna, Limbdi, Vasavad, Vithalgadh, Chotila Thana, First half of January 1939, pp. 8-11, File no. 40(15) RR IV & V, Set No. XI, History of Freedom Movement Unit, NAI

Western Indian States—Rajkot

At present a lot of maneuvering is going on in connection with the constitution of the promised Reforms Committee which has not yet been appointed by the Thakore Saheb.

Western Indian States—Junagarh

The Praja Mandal of Junagarh has not been recognised by the States as representative of the general public because the Muslims have kept aloof from it. The Mandal held two public meetings and passed a resolution requesting His Highness¹ the Nawab to grant Responsible Government. The State has appointed debt relief committee, on which cultivators of all communities are

represented, in order to determine that relief should be given to the agricultural classes. This committee is opposed by the Praja Mandal who advocate its boycott.

Western Indian States—Nawanagar

His Highness the Jam Saheb has recently been touring in his districts. He reports that much harm has already been done in the villages by agitators who have visited them.

Western Indian States: Bhavnagar

Three public meetings were held in Bhavnagar attended by 700 to 2,000 persons. A partial hartal was observed to protest against the arrest of ex-Talukdar Gopaldas during the Rajkot agitation.

Western Indian States—Dhrangadhra

Agitation for Responsible Government in the State is said to be growing.

Western Indian States—Palitana

Agitation is being conducted under the leadership of an ex-political convict from Rajkot.

Western Indian States—Limbdī

About 12 public meetings have recently been held at Limbdī. A Praja Mandal has been established and demands are being made for the introduction of Responsible Government. The Working Committee of the Kathiawar Political Conference also held a meeting in Limbdī.

Western Indian States—Vasavad

Five public meetings were held at Vasavad and a Praja Mandal has been established.

Western Indian States—Vithalgadh

Following the advice of the Political Agent, Eastern Kathiawar Agency, the Talukdar of Vithalgadh went to Ransnal and Pipalwa and after discussion with the leads agreed to give the people almost all the concessions asked for. An agreement was reached but was subsequently repudiated by the leaders and the Talukdar is still trying to reach a settlement.

Western Indian States—Chotila Thana (Eastern Kathiawar Agency)

The dispute between the Bhagdars and the cultivators of Anandpur has been settled.

¹ Sir Mahabatkhanji Rasul Khanji III, Nawab Saheb of Junagarh, b. 1900; belongs to Babi family; educated at preparatory school in England and at Mayo College, Ajmer; contributed liberally in men and money for the war.

5. Junagarhites in City Organise

Bombay Chronicle, 17 January 1939

17 January 1939

The arbitrary detention of prominent workers of the Junagarh Praja Mandal by the Junagarh State authorities came for strong criticism at a public meeting of the subjects of the State resident in Bombay, held at Popatwadi on Monday night under the Presidentship of Mr Bhulabhai Desai.

Messrs Nagindae T. Master and Ganpati Shankar Desai of the BPCC besides Mr Balvantray Mehta and several workers of the All-India States' People's Conference were present at the meeting.

Messrs Haridas Madhvadas (Vice President of the Cotton Exchange), P.H. Vasvadas, Aybkhah Khalil, Habaib K. Bhimjee, Jamnadas Kethari, Jamnadas Haridas Mehta,¹ Popatlal Chudgar, and other spoke.

Resolutions protesting against the action of the State authorities, requesting the Nawab Saheb of Junagarh to release the arrested leaders of the State Praja Mandal forthwith and congratulating the leaders were unanimously passed at the meeting.

The meeting further resolved to establish a Praja Mandal by the State subjects resident in the city and formed a Committee of the following 13 members to give effect to the resolutions passed at the meeting:

Messrs Bhawanishankar Atmaram Oza, Jamnadas Haridas Mehta, Chhaganlal Kothari, Jayantilal Vaishnan, Harakchand Motichand, Ayoobkhan Khalil, Saabb Prataprai, Chatrabhuj Sundarji Doshi, Pruthulal Va (incomplete).

¹ Jamnadas Haridas Mehta, a Gujrati lawyer, had left the Congress in 1930 over issue of Civil disobedience; had been an active AISPC leader.

6. Fortnightly Report, Western Indian States, Second half of January 1939

Fortnightly Report, Western Indian States—Rajkot, Junagarh, Nawanagar, Limbdi, Dhrangadhra, Vasavad, General, Thana Circles, Wadhwan, Second half of January 1939, File no. 40(15) RR IV & V, Set No. XI, History of Freedom Movement Unit, NAI

not dated

Western Indian States—Nawanagar

His Highness the Nawab Saheb has appointed a committee to consider that reforms should be introduced in order to liberalise the State administration. This Committee was opposed by the Praja Mandal (which consists entirely of Hindus) and a general strike was arranged. Although the President of the Praja Mandal was persuaded to cancel the programme, other members objected and launched a civil disobedience movement, as a result of which 13 leaders were arrested. The movement is now said to have subsided in consequence of the firm action taken by the State authorities.

Western Indian States—Nawanagar

A Praja Mandal has been formed in the State under instruction from Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel to stir up public opinion. The meetings were held at which it was proposed that a demand for Responsible Government should be met by who generally support the Durbar.

Western Indian States—Limbdi

There are two principal parties in Limbdi—the Sanatanists and the Reformers. The State desires to have equal representation of these two parties on the reforms committee. Outside agencies are trying to persuade the Sanatanists to restrict their activities to religious matters.

While touring the villages of the State the wife of the ex-Talukdar Gopaldas was attacked in her car by unknown persons, the car was slightly damaged.

Western Indian States—Dhrangadhra

Preparations are being made for the forthcoming sessions of the State Peoples Conference. Efforts are being made to induce the villagers to join the Conference.

Western Indian States—Vasavad

Some agitators from Rajkot went to Dadwa under Vasavad and instigated the cultivators to not pay taxes or share of the produce to their talukdars.

The people of Vasavad have formulated their demands and presented them to the talukdars with an ultimatum that a civil disobedience campaign will be launched if they are not accepted.

Western Indian States—General: Thana Circles

One of the Talukdars of Ludhika (Western Kathiawar Agency, granted certain concessions to his cultivators as regards revenue dues. This led other cultivators to demands similar concessions from their Talukdars.

Ex-Durbar Gopaldas visited Limbdi (Eastern Kathiawar Agency) and Babra (Western Kathiawar Agency) and advised the people to put their case before their Talukdar before they launched a civil disobedience movement.

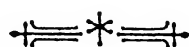
Some agitators from Rajkot and elsewhere visited Gundails, Tuva and Kherali under the Wadhwan-Bhoika Thana (Eastern Kathiawar Agency) and exhorted the cultivators not to pay more than 1/3rd of the produce to their Talukdars, not to pay Veth and not to render compulsory labour, etc.

7. Farcical Reforms in Palanpur

Bombay Chronicle, 20 April 1939

20 April 1939

The Constitutional Reforms announced by the Nawab of Palanpur probably represents the type of response from most states to the Viceroy's recent appeal to the Princes. Palanpur will have in the future an Assembly called the Raj Sabha which will consist of a majority of elected members 'representing various interests in the state' and will 'advise' the Ministers on questions of importance. In other words the Sabha will be a purely advisory body without any power over the Ministers. Nor does it seem to have any legislative power. It may also be presumed that the 'various interests' will be so manipulated as to make the Sabha more subservient to the Ruler than representative of the people as a whole. Even two decades ago these reforms would have been considered disappointing. Today they are not worth looking at. And few will be deceived by the promise that the Ruler will 'gradually share the responsibility of the administration with our subjects'. The promise is as worthless as the present fame of reforms which give no real power whatsoever to the people.



VII CENTRAL INDIA: INDORE

1. Awakening in Central India States: Indore Praja Mandal's demands

Hitavada, 5 February 1939

Jabbulpore
3 February 1939

In the wake of public agitation in the Rajkot and the Jaipur States, signs of mass awakening are visible in the States of the Central India States Agency also.

At Indore, the Praja Mandal in the course of its meeting held the other day under the Presidentship of Mr Hazarilal Jadia,¹ has demanded the Holkar Government to introduce Responsible Government in the States at an early date on the lines of the constitution framed by the Praja Parishad.

The Mandal, among its other demands, has asked the Government to grant civil liberty to the State subjects by repealing the repressive measures adopted by the latter to check the rising spirit of freedom and to establish a Constituent Assembly in the State with four-fifth elected and one-fifth nominated members with right to elect its President and Vice-President.

The Mandal has further demanded that the leader of the House should be appointed as the Prime Minister of the State with full freedom to form his own cabinet with the approval of the Maharaja;² and that the House should have the control over the Purse of the Maharaja, which should not exceed in any case 10 per cent of the total income of the State.

As regards the Legislation, the Mandal has asked the Maharaja to approve and enact any Bill passed by the Assembly.

The Mandal has also called upon the Ruler to present the annual budget of the State before the House and get it approved by it and the State representatives in the Federal Assembly. In case the House passes any bill vetoed by the Maharaja then it should be approved and enforced by the Maharaja; if the House passes the same bill thrice despite its successive disapproval by the latter. The Federal Assembly (if it is inaugurated at all), should be elected by the public instead of being nominated by the Darbar, and that the Maharaja should be in-charge of the foreign department.

In the meantime, the Mandal has suggested that a committee with two-third elected and one third nominated members be appointed to draft a constitution and then present the same within two months before the Maharaja for his approval, after which it should come into force within one month

¹ Hazarilal Jadia, member, Working Committee of the Central India States' Peoples' Conference

² Yashwant Rao Holkar Bahadur, b. 1908, succeeded to the throne in 1926; educated in England 1920-23 and at Christchurch, Oxford 1926-29, married the daughter of the junior chief of Kohlapur; delegate to the Round Table Conference (RTC) in 1931, at the outbreak of the war placed his entire resources at the disposal of the British crown.

2. Indore Astir

National Front, 29 January 1939

The Congress members of Indore City were to have gone to the polls on Sunday 8th January, 1939 to elect the city quota of the delegates for the Tripuri Session of the Indian National Congress. But the necessity of polling was obviated at the eleventh hour, and withdrawal from the contest by the right-wing group of candidates thus gave a walkover to the radicals pledged to end the non-

intervention policy of Congress regarding the States People's movement. Indore City and outlying rural areas together having 1400 Congress Membership constitute one of the districts of the Ajmer—Marwara and Rajputana province, the quota allotted to this district being 5 urban and 3 rural. This year the group of State workers led by Sjt Haribhau Upadhyay¹ did not contest the Congress elections. However, the other right-wing groups had put up 5 candidates. The compromise talks regarding the elections has failed due to the right-wing refusing to give 2 seats to the left-wingers which they had demanded. Finally, realizing the strength of the left-wing, the right-wingers decided to withdraw from the contest. Among the returned delegates are Com. Divakar Ghodgaokjar, Khandkar, Karandikar,² etc. All these have taken active part in public agitation for the repeal of public meeting restrictions and labour ordinance, finally resulting in the modification of the former. The elected delegates are expected to give a tough fight against apologists of non-intervention policy regarding the States People in the forthcoming Session of the Congress. One of them is sure to be elected to the AICC.

Municipal Councillors Resign

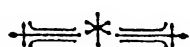
The Indore Durbar has recently passed orders to hold Municipal by-elections for the 14 seats in the Municipal Council vacated by resignations of the Praja Mandal representatives on it. The official-ridden character of the Indore City Municipal Council is too obvious as there are 17 elected representatives and an equal number of government nominees and an official President on top of them. The Government had ordered municipal reforms inquiry in 1935 but the report has not yet seen the light of day. The Praja Mandal representatives on the Municipal Council had given ultimatum to the Government to bring out the report within a month, and on its expiry they resigned their seats on 9 December 1938 in protest against the official-ridden character of the Council and the dilatory policy of the Darbar. The by-election are bound to result in the triumphant return of these same Praja Mandal representatives thus registering the people's protest against the denial of self-government to them in local and municipal matters.

Forthcoming Praja Parishad Session

According to the decision of the Nagar Praja Mandal at its meeting held on 31 December 1938, the session of the Praja Parishad will be held in the city in the third week of February 1939. Representatives of various sections of the population all over the State are expected to attend the session to voice their demands and to decide the future course of action for achieving their central demands of Responsible Self-Government, Civil Liberties and other demands of various sections of people, which will be put forward for public support and approval. The preparations for the session have just begun, but the traditions which Indore has set up during the last few months in the classic campaign for liberties culminating in the hunger-strike of Sjt Hazarilal Jadia promise huge success for the forthcoming session of the Praja Parishad.

¹ Haribhau Upadhyay (1892–1972); completed his education at Benaras Hindu University; editor of Gandhi's Hindi Newspaper, the *Navjeevan*; 1926, Gandhi sent him to Indore to resolve differences between the mill owners and the striking workers; established Gandhi Ashram at Ajmer; played significant role in activities of All India States People's Conference in Rajasthan and Central India; after independence, education minister in Rajasthan Government.

² Janardan Sakharam Karandikar was editor of *Kesari* from 1930 to 1946.



3. Move of Popular Awakening in Indore

Bombay Chronicle, 8 July 1939

Sjt Hazarilal Jadia, one of the members of the Working Committee of the Central India State's People's Conference, has issued the following statement on the present political situation of Indore State:

The State authorities knew well that the popular movement led by Praja Mandal is gathering more volume, depth and militancy. They thought it expedient to nip the movement in the bud and therefore the Government reinforced the existing arsenal of 'Legal' weapons to suppress the constitutional struggle for democratic rights and Responsible Government. They deported several well-known political workers from Indore, prohibited annual session of the Praja Mandal and put ban on Congress leaders like Sjt Subhas Chandra Bose and Professor Indra prohibiting their entry into the State.

As a matter of fact the State authorities aimed at crushing the spirit of the people once and for all, and therefore to terrorise them, resorted to repression to break the famous hartal observed by the united will of the people to fight feudal oppression with greater energy.

I hereby declare that if the said repressive measures, viz., banning orders on the entry of Congress leaders into the State, prohibition of meetings, acts and deportation orders are not withdrawn before the 25 July 1939, I shall perform individual civil disobedience based on non-violent principles. I don't think it necessary to consult any person in this connection because, I think, it is duty of every individual to stake even his life to safeguard his birth-right of citizenship. This is a convinced fact for me, and therefore I see no other way to fight it but to the bitter end.

4. K.L. Vaidya's¹ statement on Indore Praja Mandal

Press Statement, AISPC Papers, File No. 106, NMML

Indore
8 December 1939

There is great discontentment in the whole (sic) Indore State again. The Prime Minister Col. Dinanath² has delivered a lengthy address before the Legislative Council, which is nothing but a mockery of democracy, in which he has spoken on constitutional reforms and political agitation. Politically speaking, Indore under its Prime Minister, Col. Dinanath, is steadily retreating into the middle ages. In the speech before the Legislative Council, the Prime Minister, speaking on political agitation, has again repeated the same threats unashamedly....

The threat against even constitutional agitation, and therefore against fundamental civil liberties in Indore is groundless and misleading. Prajamandal workers are dubbed as disloyal. But there is not even an iota of truth in this charge. The Prime Minister has banned four Gujarat Hindi newspapers under the allegation that they were making propaganda against Maharaja Holkar, which is a white lie. He has detained the prominent public worker Sjt Hazarilal Jadia for the last three months in the State jail without any trial. Mr Jadia's only fault was that he had demanded enquiries in the lathi charges which were made by the Indore Police during the last hartal on peaceful citizens. The police officers are responsible for such barbarous acts for which the retiring Prime Minister Sir Siremal Bapna had publicly promised that enquiry will be made regarding the lathi charge incident. But the present Prime Minister is not at all prepared to consider this general demand of the Indore public—Prajamandal, and other responsible institutions. Not only that but the publicity officer has made allegations against the retiring Prime Minister regarding this lathi charge and hartal.

So far as the activities of the Prajamandal are concerned, they are absolutely peaceful and constitutional. The Prajamandal has also avoided the situations when attempts were made by certain hooligans and opponents to create disturbances. It is the policy of the Prime Minister that is responsible for creating conflicts among the peoples. The newly started parallel organisation, Praja Sangh, which is condemned by the executive of the Central India States' Peoples' Conference and the Standing Committee of the All India States' Peoples' Conference, is a creation of reactionary persons, and is supported generally by vested interests and state officials. All over the State the State officers and the persons having vested interests are working against the Prajamandal and are helping the parallel reactionary Praja Sangh. The allegations of the Prime Minister against the Prajamandal workers are not at all true. While carrying on activities, leaders here have not shirked and will not shirk their responsibilities and if they are arrested they will be too glad. The Prajamandal workers and the newspaper which are banned by the Prime Minister, the workers which were detained and are still in jail all have shown their loyalty towards the Maharaja on more than one occasion, not only in words but in deeds as well. From the very inception of the Indore Rajya Prajamandal, workers and newspapers are repeatedly stressing their loyalty to the Maharaja. Yet the charge of disloyalty is repeatedly hurled at them simply to make the position of the Prime Minister Col. Dinanath safe, which is unsafe since the day he has taken the charge...

¹ Kanhaiyalal D. Vaidya, General Secretary of the Central India State's People's Conference; belonged to Khandwa and was inclined towards a socialist ideology

² Col. Dinanath b. 1885; educated at Government College, Lahore and Oxford; Bar at Law at Lincoln's Inn; Private Secretary to Maharaja Holkar, 1914-20; Judge, Patiala State High Court, 1920-23; Chief Minister, Mandi State, 1924-25; Minister in waiting, Holkar State, 1937, Finance Minister and then Prime Minister, 1939.

Gwalior

1. Gwalior State Reforms

National Herald, 27 November 1939

Jhansi

27 November 1939

In a statement to the press, Mr Shivshankar Rawal, President of the Gwalior Sarvjanik Sabha, asks the State's people to non-cooperate with the reforms¹ recently announced by the Maharaja² of Gwalior. He says that at a recent conference which has the privilege of the guidance of Dr Pattabhi Sitaramayya the Sabha has adopted a policy of non-cooperation towards the recent reforms and completely rejected them.³ This must be clearly borne in mind by the Sabha workers and the people, both of whom will non-cooperate with every activity regarding the introduction of these reforms. The people are expected to carry out in letter and spirit of this policy. They should non-cooperate with the work of the Franchise Committee, which was appointed recently and refuse to give any assistance.

The rejection by the Ruler of the memorandum⁴ submitted by the Sabha, suggesting constitutional changes, and the turning down of the unanimous report of the Reforms Committee which comprised five State Ministers and three non-officials and the announcement of a reactionary constitution, have all led the Sabha to adopt an attitude of non-cooperation.

Even the ordinary request of the Sabha to grant its representatives interview has been turned down by the Ruler. This left no option but to non-cooperate with the State Government in all the activities regarding the reforms.

¹ The scheme of reforms was announced by Maharaja Scindia on the Birthday Durbar on 14 June 1939.

² Sir Jivaji Rao Scindia, b 1916; ascended to the throne of Gwalior, 1927; assumed full ruling powers in 1936; educated privately till metric; attended Victoria College, Gwalior; received settlement and revenue training at Lyallpur; administrative training at Bombay and Bangalore; appointed Vice-President of East India Association, London in 1937.

³ The Central Committee of the Gwalior State Sarvajanik Sabha declared the reforms as 'inadequate, retrograde, unsatisfactory and unacceptable'.

⁴ The memorandum called for a unicameral legislature with three-fourths of elected members. It demanded certain powers for the House, including the power to introduce adjournment motions and cut motions on the budget. In sum, the memorandum wanted the Maharaja to initiate measures that would lead to the establishment of Responsible Government. For resolution passed by the Central Committee on 23 July 1939, see AISPC Papers, File No. 12, group No. 1, NMML.

2. The Gwalior Sarvajanik Sabha:

S. Gokhale to General Secretary, AISPC, 3 December 1939

AISPC Papers, File No. G-12, 1937-39, NMML. S. Gokhale was General Secretary of the Gwalior Sarvajanik Sabha

Ujjain

3 December 1939

The Gwalior Rajya Sarvajanik Sabha in its 22nd annual session recently held at Lashkar has resolved to adopt the National Tricolour Flag as the official flag of the Sabha. By another resolution it has been decided to organise a 'Sarvajanik Sabha Sewadal' (Volunteer Corps). The undersigned will, therefore, be highly obliged if you kindly send to the above address relevant literature regarding (i) The National Tricolour Flag and (ii) The Congress Volunteers organisations (whether 'Hindustan Sewadal' or 'the Congress militia' or any other like institution)...

Bhopal

1. Bhopal State People's Conference

AISPC Papers, File No. 18, part 2, NMML

Bhopal

13 April 1939

Under the auspices of the Bhopal State People's Conference a largely attended public meeting was held on the 12th April to inform the public about the gist of the interview between HH the Ruler of Bhopal,¹ and Mr Shakir Ali Khan,² President of the Bhopal State People's Conference, which took place at Sultanpur (Bhopal) on the burning problems in the Bhopal State. Mr Qudus Sahbai, ex-editor daily *Hind*, Calcutta presided.

Before Mr Shakir Ali Khan delivered his speech Mr Babhlala Sharma, Comrades Mangli Prasad and Akhlaq Mohammad Khan and Pt C.N. Malaviya,³ MLC, spoke on the problem of public services, labour organisation, kisan's present deplorable plight, and the demand of Responsible Government of the State, respectively.

Comrade Akhlaq Mohammad Khan strongly condemned the notification of allowing the State Public Servants to be agriculturists and sahuikars, who out of selfish motives have ousted many poor kisans, and quoted a number of examples of the atrocities and misuse of their powers. He also proved the utter failure of the irrigation scheme which has been doing no good to these kisans.

Pt Chatur Narain Malaviya speaking on the subjects of 'Responsible Government' and showing it to be the only remedy of present zulum, explained how the present system of Bhopal Government is out of date and invited the citizens to organise and prepare themselves to achieve the same. Addressing the meeting he pointed out what harm is being done by the Public Meeting Notification No. 18 of 1937, and how it had told upon the religious, social, and political life of the subjects. The speaker also warned the people against the prevalent pernicious propaganda of the mischief-mongers to divide the present consolidated and organised forces of the Congress in the name of religion and other harmful tactics.

When Mr Shakir Ali Khan arose to speak the audience received him amidst slogan of 'Inquilab Zindabad' and a long rumbling of cheers. He summed up the whole conversation under the four heads. In the first place, he stated that HH the Nawab of Bhopal showed full readiness to tackle the problem of unemployment and said that those who deserve immediate help would receive consideration forthwith. In the second place, such repressive and reactionary laws which handicap the activities of advancement would, after being probed, be rejected or repealed. In the third place, an application may be submitted to effect the necessary change in the administration. In the fourth place, HH the Ruler of Bhopal is fully prepared to consider sympathetically every legitimate and right proposal with regard to the reform in the State...

¹ Nawab Sikander Sulat Ifthar ul Mulk Muhammad Hamdulla Khan Bahadur succeeded to the throne in 1926; Chancellor of Chamber of Princes, 1931-32; participated in RTC's in England; international polo player; actively supervised administration of State.

² Shakir Ali Khan was ex-President of Bhopal Rajya Parishad; employed as Naik in Sultania Infantry of Bhopal, later as Ryotwari Moharri; left Bhopal government service in 1932; leader of Bhopalis; founded association called Anjuman Khuddam e Watan with the objective of ameliorating condition of Bhopalis, attended AISPC at Ludhiana in 1939.

³ Chatur Narain Malviya; former Chief Minister of Bhopal State; joined Gandhi Ashram in 1939; arrested in 1940; elected as independent member on support of Hindu Mahasabha to State Legislative Council, 1937-40, President of Praja Mandal, 1938.

2. Affairs in Bhopal: Statement issued to the Press by K.D. Vaidya on political situation in Bhopal State on 20 April 1939 AISPC Papers. File No. 12, Group No. 1, NMML

Dohad
20 April 1939

Mr Kanhaiyalal D. Vidya, General Secretary of the Central India States' Peoples' Conference and member of the Standing Committee of the All-India States' People's Conference, have issued the following Statement on the present political situation of Bhopal State to the Press:

It seems that dark clouds of dissatisfaction and political trouble are hanging low over the Bhopal State. Even today the Government of Bhopal is perhaps anxious to remain where it was decades ago. The Government till now has neither removed the restrictions on the civil liberties of the Bhopal subjects, nor had accepted the suggestions of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru for allowing an enquiry into the position of Civil Liberties in the State by the Indian Civil Liberties Union. The

Bhopal State would have gained rather than lost in moral status and popularity if it would have accepted the suggestion of enquiry through the authority of an independent body like the Indian Civil Liberties Union in whom the public have trust. This continued repression of Civil Liberties, far from retarding the movement of the people, has only strengthened it and secured greater support and sympathy from the subjects of Bhopal and the outside world.

The only political institution working for Bhopal State subjects is the Bhopal States' People Conference. Though the object of this institution is Complete Responsible Government under the aegis of the Bhopal Ruler, still the immediate issue before it is one of Civil Liberties, as in the absence of Civil Liberties the Conference is unable to enforce the demand of Responsible Government.

While the Bhopal States' People Conference workers are engaged in their constitutional activities and the subjects are supporting the Conference workers in their attempts to end the tyranny that suppresses them, some misguided persons are making rival political attempts to misguide the people and create frictions, and some are engaged in raising a false cry with a view to create opposition from the vested interests. But such divisive activities are bound to fail, as the people know it on the highest possible authority in Bhopal that many public leaders have frequently tried to grind their private axes on the public wheel and betrayed the cause they ostensibly stood for.

At such a critical time it is a matter of satisfaction that the Nawab Saheb of Bhopal, who is fortunately progressive in his views, has considered the gravity of the situation and has met the real representative of the Bhopal subjects Mr Shakir Ali Khan, the President of the Bhopal States' People Conference.

3. On the Central Indian States: K.N.Vaidya to Jawaharlal Nehru, 20 April 1939

AISPC Papers, File No. 106, NMML

*Camp Biaora (Rajgarh)
20 April 1939*

Respected Friend,

After visiting a number of CI states I arrived at Bhopal on the 18th instant to carry on propaganda about the CI Conference Session, Dohad, and the Ludhiana Resolutions of the All-India States' Peoples' Conference. The CI Session is going to be held at Dohad on the 14 May 1939 under the Presidentship of Acharya Shree Narendra Deoji.

The situation in Bhopal is as before. The restrictions on the Civil Liberties continue as before. The only change which has taken place is the attitude of the Nawab of Bhopal. Recently the Nawab has interviewed the President of the Bhopal States' People Conference, Mr Shakir Ali Khan, and exchanged his views regarding political reforms. While the Nawab is consulting the Parishad President, certain misguided persons are trying to create rival political parties. Not only that, but certain vested interests have attempted to raise a false cry of protest against the Praja Parishad President. Those persons who were till now engaged in bogus political activities in the name of the Congress in Bhopal have now engaged themselves in arranging a Bhopal. All Parties Political Conference. They had declared that Seth Govindadas¹ of Jubbalpore will preside and political discussions regarding Responsible Government etc. will be held. While the Praja Parishad is working for the establishment of Responsible Government in Bhopal State under the aegis of Nawab of Bhopal, the present move of All Parties Political Conference is a rival move to divide the public opinion on this issue and hence I have issued the enclosed statement to the press.

Mr Shakir Ali Khan will possibly try to meet you personally at Allahabad and will acquaint you with the real situation. I hope you will do the needful.

From Bhopal I came here. This place is in Raigarh State surrounded by Narsinggarh and Khilchipur State. All these three States are small states. In Raigarh State for the last three years a minority Council of Administration is administering the whole state. Thakur Devisingh, a Judicial Officer of Mhow, is the president and Dewan of the State Council. There is a Praja Mandal in Raigarh State. The Dewan has exchanged his views twice with me. He is of opinion that slow progress is possible in this state. Till now there is no ban on open public meetings. A public meeting, first in the history of this place, was held yesterday in which nearly 1,000 persons were present. The peasants of all these States, Raigarh, Narsinggarh and Khilchipur are highly taxed. The land revenue is unbearable and the peasants have no right of mortgage or sale of the land. They are only tenants. The land revenue is very high in Raigarh State and the peasants are entirely ruined. A number of peasants had complained yesterday that they had to sell their small children for paying the land revenue. The peasants, as a protest against the unbearable land revenue, had submitted their land pattas with resignations, and during the last ten days more than 2 lakhs of rupees of land revenue patta are said to have been returned by them before the Raigarh Dewan. More than two hundred peasants met me here yesterday and acquainted me with the situation. I am going today to Raigarh and will let you know the further details.

The Narsinggarh State is the most backward State. There is absolutely no freedom of association. The ruler² of Bikaner had selected Narsinggarh center for his political conspiracies and in February last he had camped there for few days and advised the CI Rulers and Dewans that they must not allow any political institution and follow the policy of keeping the people away from political activities. The Dewan, who is a Delhi man, had not allowed Mrs Rameshwari Nehru to deliver a public speech at Narsinggarh. Not only that but the police has been ordered to prepare a list of those persons who are reading newspapers, and who interacted with any outside political worker. In January last I had been to Narsinggarh, but after my departure I was informed that the old man where I was staying was harassed by the police and was compelled to give in writing that in future he will not allow any one to stay with him. The State is also taking interest in lotteries and some Punjabi businessmen acting under the name of Jolly brothers are regularly conducting lotteries. There are a number of serious allegations against the State Administration and the State servants which will be communicated to you afterwards with the hope that you will do the needful.

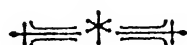
It would have been much better if you would have agreed to preside over the Dohad session. This Province is most backward and is administered in medieval age spirit. I hope you will keep yourself in touch with the condition of this province.

Hoping to be excused for this trouble.

Yours truly,

¹ A wealthy marwari of Jabbalpur and was President, Provincial Congress Committee in 1929.

² Vikram Singh, b. 1909; belongs to Paramar branch of Agnikul Rajputs; succeeded to throne of Narsinggarh in 1924; educated at Daly College, Indore and Mayo College, Ajmer; married daughter of heir apparent of Cutch State.



Others

1. On Rewa

Fortnightly Report, Central India Rewa, Bundelkhand, Sohawal, 1st half of January 1939, File No. 40(15)-P, 1939, Political Department, GOI, available in File No. 80/3 RIV & V, Set No. XI, History of Freedom Movement Unit, NAI

1st half of January 1939

His Highness the Maharaja¹ of Rewa² asked for the Resident's views in connection with a request made by the Reception Committee of the 52nd Session of the Indian National Congress for the loan of some State elephants for the Presidential procession. Though remarking that his views regarding Congress were well known, His Highness evidently thought it would be 'not impolitic' to oblige them, and said he understood that the example set last year by the Bansda Darbar in lending a chariot is already being followed on this occasion by the Ruler of Surguja,³ who is lending some elephants. He has been told that, taking all the various factors into consideration, the Resident's personal opinion was that it might be as well to comply with the request up to a reasonable extent.

Central India—Bundelkhand

The position in some of the smaller jagirs continues to give ground for some anxiety. The center of the trouble is at Tori Fatehpur where cultivators, under outside influence, continue to make quite unreasonable demands in spite of concessions already granted. The Jagir police force is negligible, and on the recommendation of the Political Agent⁴, the Resident has authorized the sending of a small force of the Agency Police there with his Assistant, in the hope that this may restore respect for authority.

It appears that other neighbouring Jagirs are waiting upon events in Tori-Fatehpur and this enhances the importance of effecting a satisfactory settlement there.

Central India—Sohawal

There is also a certain amount of trouble in Sohawal where the discontented element is opposing payment of land revenue and demanding additions to the very substantial concessions made as the result of the detailed enquiry, which followed the fatal affray of last July. It seems that the Raja⁵ is not cooperating as he should and the Resident has authorized the Political Agent⁶ to inform him that if there is any further cause for complaint, the Resident would have to recommend that the State be taken entirely under him. It will become necessary sooner or later in consequence of the serious state of indebtedness which has now come to light.

¹ Sir Gulab Singh Ji Deo Bahadur, b. 1903; ascended the gadi of Rewa in 1918; invested with ruling powers in 1922; educated at Daly College, Indore; married sister of Maharaja of Jodhpur; noted sportsman; delegate to 1st and 2nd session of Round Table Conference.

² Rewa is the largest and the easternmost State in the Central India. It is bounded in the north by Banda, Allahabad and Mirzapur districts of the UP, on the east by feudatory State of Chota Nagpur, on the south by Central Provinces and on the west by State of Sohawal and Kothi. The Maharaja, assisted by State Council of 8 members comes on the Administration.

³ Ramanuj Saran Singh Deo, CBE ascended the gadi of Surguja in 1917; recently admitted as member of Chamber of Princes; been sportsman and an enlightened ruler; contributed Rs 1 lakh towards war; Surguja is second largest State of Chattisgarh Agency

⁴ Political Agent—Bundelkhand was L.W. Jardine

⁵ Raja Jogendra Singhji Deo Bahadur; b. 1900; educated at the Daly College, Indore; ascended the gadi of Sohawal State in 1930; belongs to the famous clan of Baghela Rajputs; administration of State is carried on by a Council of which the Durbar is the Resident.

⁶ Political Agent for Bhopal—I.t. Col. H.W.C. Robson and for Bundelkhand—L.W. Jardine.

2. Chhuikhadan State Agitation

Hitavada, 12 February 1939

2 February 1939

Mr Sarat Chandra Sinhal, the Financial Advisor to the Ruling Chief of Chhuikhadan, has tendered resignation from his post, and has joined the State Congress Committee.

He has issued a statement through the State Congress Committee giving reasons for his resignation. Mr Sinhal in his statement says that when he found that his sincere advice, not to launch repression, fell on deaf ears, his conscience dictated him to sever his connection with the State as he could not associate himself with the regime of repression prevailing in the State. He further states that he has joined the State Congress fully believing in its principles. Mr Sinhal has signed the pledge of the State Congress.

Mass Satyagraha

On February 4 last the State Congress Committee launched mass Satyagraha to defy the ban put on the State Congress Committee. It was already announced that on the said date a huge public meeting would be held within the State limits. Mr Sarat Chandra Sinhal with two others was nominated dictator for the purpose. Long before the appointed time, a large number of peasants had assembled on the spot. The State authorities had made all possible arrangements to maintain law and order. Mr Sinhal delivered a speech and was put under arrest. He was followed by Messrs Madanlal Patdar and Ramdhar who were also arrested. Then a batch of 16 volunteers defied Sec. 144 and were taken into custody. After the arrests the people dispersed calmly.

Protest Meeting

A public meeting under the Chairmanship of Mr R.N. Harshul was held on February 3, at Narmad (Khairs, Gandal Zamindari) to protest and condemn the activities and the propaganda carried on in the press by the state authorities against the State Congress Committee and its workers. The meeting asked the national press not to publish news based on lies. The meeting also condemned the lathi charges on the Forest and Jhands Satyagrahas. The meeting further passed a resolution condemning the attitude of the State towards the political prisoners, who were treated as ordinary criminals and were supplied with only one blanket to be shared by two. The food supplied to them was not worth human consumption and as a result of which, several of the political prisoners were ailing from untold bodily maladies.

3. Repression in Chhuikhadan State

Hitavada 17 February 1939

17 February 1939

Repression, according to a message, [at] Chhuikhadan, A State in the Chhuikhadan division of the Central Provinces, is in full swing to suppress the public agitation for the reforms in the State. It is reported that with a view to inflict a blow to the progress of the present movement, the administration

of the State has been brought under the direct control of the Political Agent. The old Dewan of the State, Mr Mahadeva Prasad, has resigned and has been succeeded in his office by Mr S.K. Shrivastava, a nominee of the Political Agent. A party of about 130 soldiers has also been requisitioned by the State authorities from outside to control the situation and also to standby.

The new Dewan, on assuming the charge of his office, has published and distributed pamphlets in large numbers among the subjects of the State, in which he has felt the necessity of introducing some reforms in the State to improve its administration. He has also advised the people not to be misled by the agitators.

It is further reported that Mr Udairani Baraj, the 13th 'director' of the People's Committee and Mr Pooranchand, another enthusiastic worker, have been arrested by the State Police while Mr Uday Ram Lodhi Purena has been sentenced to 6 months' rigorous imprisonment for waging agitation against the State Government.

With a view to meet the situation and further to stem the tide of repression, the Congress workers under the guidance of Mr Harshaul Mishra are enrolling volunteers in the state with full vigour. The public workers in the State are also contemplating to launch 'no rent' campaign in the Chhuikhadan State in near future.¹

¹ On the advice of Gandhi, satyagraha was dropped in Ranjandgoan and Chhuikhadan State in Chatusgarh division.

4. States are an Anachronism

Bombay Chronicle, 3 April 1939

Jubbulpore
1 April 1939

Addressing a mass meeting of the citizens of Rutlam on Monday last, held under the auspices of the Rutlam Rajya Praja Mandal to consider over the issue of Responsible Government in the Indian State, with Dr Devi Singh, President of the Rutlam Rajya Praja Mandal in the Chair, Mr Kanhaiyalal Vaidya, the Provincial Secretary of the Central India States' People Conference and a member of the Standing Committee of the All India States' People Conference traced the history of the so-called States, treaties with the Paramount Power, which he stated, were made without any reference or regard for the people. These treaties, he held, are completely out of date, and they cannot be binding on the people.

Out of Date

Referring to the resolutions of the Ludhiana Conference, Mr Vaidya explained their meanings, and remarked that the present system of the Indian States is completely out of date and, looking to the progress made by the rest of India, it is necessary to put an end to this system, and bring their administration to the level of British India by establishing full Responsible Government. Apart from this he observed, the States, whose population is less than 20 lakhs or income less than 50 lakhs and which are not in a position to maintain the standard of administration necessary for the purpose of uniting with a free and Federated India, should be amalgamated with the neighbouring provinces. If the rulers agree to these proposals, their right and privileges will be maintained reasonably.

Uttering a note of warning, the speaker went on to say that the rulers must read the signs, and take heed from the attitude of the Indian National Congress, Mahatma Gandhi, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, and the Paramount Power. His Excellency the Viceroy's speech, he said, is nothing but a

last word to the Indian Rulers on the question of Federation and Reforms. The Central India States Rulers should take to heart the advice given by His Excellency the Viceroy. The scheme which the Resident of the Central India States has submitted before the rulers at Nawgong, for the establishment of a common High Court and police administration, unification of many departments of the States, with a central body to coordinate their Administration to curtail the personal and ceremonial expenditure and spend the amounts for public utility purposes, should also be accepted by the rulers, as these suggestions are in their best interest. If the Central India States Rulers fail to act according to the advice and insist upon continuing their autocratic and irresponsible administration, this would lead them to grave and disastrous consequences.

Continuing, the speaker observed that Mahatma Gandhi and the Paramount Power have allowed the Princes a breathing time and this is probably the last chance. The princes must avail of this opportunity, otherwise they must be prepared to face the worst.

Stand United

The speaker then criticized the administration of Rutlam State, and advised the people to strengthen their Praja Mandal for the achievement of Responsible Government. He also advised the Maharaja to introduce reforms and establish Responsible Government to the satisfaction of the people at an early date.

Messrs. Abdul Hafizkhan and Bhajamishanker Dikshat also appealed to the people to stand united and agitate for the establishment of the Responsible Government.

5. On the ruler of Samthar

AISPC Papers, File No. 106, NMML

Gwalior State
6 April 1939

Mr Kanhaiyalal D. Vaidya, General Secretary Central India States' People Conference, has issued the following to the press:

Reports received from Samthar State of Bundelkhand, CI Agency, shows that the people have started Satyagraha in Samthar to end the autocratic and irresponsible rule of the Samthar Ruler and establish Responsible Government. But looking to the advise of Mahatma Gandhi and the attitude of His Excellency the Viceroy and the Resident of Central India States, Mr K.S. Fitze, they have postponed the Satyagraha.

Samthar is a small State with a population of 33,307 souls and an annual income of rupees 7 lakhs. The Ruler realises 31 kinds of taxes from the subjects and a general system of monopoly is freely introduced in the State with a view to exhort more from the poor subjects. Freedom of speech, press and association is denied to the subjects and a number of public workers were arrested and sentenced, and freely lathi charges and firings were made on the peaceful subjects. Even the National Flag has been banned and the keeping of the National Flag has been declared an offence under Section 124A and the police is authorized with summary powers to arrest any one without warrant. This small state like other smaller States of CI has been known to be a disgrace and even today, like the Permanent Settlement, the Samthar Ruler proposes to go on with such medieval administration forever.

But the Ruler of Samthar should take notice of the Resolutions of the Ludhiana Session of the Indian States' Peoples Conference adopted for amalgamation of smaller States, which is further supplemented in His Excellency the Viceroy's speech at the Chamber of Princes.² The advise

given by the Resident of the CI States for uniting the smaller States like Samthar could only make provisions for education, roads, public health and other public utility services by combining and pulling their resources together. Owing to smallness and financial weakness, the smaller States like Samthar are totally unable to run the administration on modern lines. With a view to introduce Responsible Government, smaller States like Samthar should be amalgamated either singly or in groups with the neighbouring provinces for the purpose of administration, with suitable provisions for the reasonable rights and privileges of the rulers concerned.

The Samthar Ruler must accept the above advise and introduce Responsible Government in the State, otherwise the Samthar people will have to restart Satyagraha.

¹ Sir Bir Singh Deo, b. 1865, ruler of Samthar succeeded to the throne in 1896.

² On 13-14 March, Annual Session of the Chamber of Princes at New Delhi.

6. Central India States' People Conference

Bombay Chronicle, 16 May 1939

Dohad

15 May 1939

A plea for the sinking of all differences among State peoples everywhere was made by Acharya Narendra Dev, in the course of his presidential address at the Central India States' People Conference which commenced here last night.

The speech was punctuated by applause and was delivered extempore, lasting for nearly 150 minutes. Archaryaji traced in the course of his speech the development of the States Peoples movement and the growth of democratic governments elsewhere.

He said that the States Peoples movement derived its strength from the Congress and regretted that the movements in various States should have been suspended by Gandhiji when they appeared to be gaining in momentum. He made an appeal for help for the journal conducted by the conference.

Earlier yesterday a great reception was accorded to the President-elect on his arrival. He was profusely garlanded and taken in a procession. In the morning yesterday, an impressive flag salutation ceremony was held when the President hoisted the tri-colour. In doing so he declared he was glad that the Praja Parishads were adopting the tri-colour flag which was the flag of the entire nation, thus symbolizing that the struggle of the people of British India and the people of India was identical.

7. An Appeal

AISPC Papers, *Madhya Bharat*, File No. 106, NMML

Dohad

24 May 1939

Sjt Kanhaiyalal D. Vaidya, General Secretary of the Central India States' People Conference, and member of the Standing Committee of the All India States' People Conference has issued the following appeal to the Praja Mandal and people of Central India States through the press:

Reports received from Indore says that repression is in full swing in Indore. Ordinances are issued, lathi charges are made, Section 144 promulgated. Police and Military is patrolling the city streets, respectable citizens like Sir Seth Hukamchand are compelled to open shops. Newspapers

like Janmabhoomi of Bombay are banned, more than two dozen leading public workers and citizens are arrested, the Praja Mandal Conference session is postponed. Thus all attempts of the Indore people for peaceful propaganda, peaceful protest, peaceful organisation are met by the brutal violence of the State authorities, backed by the armed might and political influence of the Political Department.

The Central India States' People Conference session has passed a special resolution for Indore in which the Conference with deep regret noted the exceptionally backward reactionary position occupied by the Indore State in respect of Civil Liberties and responsible rule. After condemning the repression, the Conference had expressed its solidarity with people of Indore in their struggle of Responsible Government and gave its support to the demand of the Indore people for removing all restrictions on Civil Liberties and hoped that the Indore Government will remove all such restrictions. But the hope of the Central India People's is extinguished by the Indore State and a reign of terror is prevailing in Indore. The position in Indore is getting from bad to worse. It will be an insult to Indore public if the Central India People's will tolerate the present Ordinance Rule and the suppression of organisation and prevention of public gatherings with methods usually associated with gangsters. Is Indore to remain a vast prison where the human spirit is sought to be extinguished and the resources of the people are to be used to suppress the voice of the people and maintain irresponsible, autocratic rule in comparison to medieval ages?

The Central India States' Praja Mandal and public workers must wake up and sympathise with the Indore public, as Indore is giving a lead to all the Central India Rulers. Today it is the turn of Indore, tomorrow it may be of Bhopal, Gwalior, Rutlam or Dhar. The real fact is that all the Central India States, and the vested interests are alarmed at their diminishing power in the State of CI and the growing influence of the Praja Mandal, the States' People's Conference and the Congress. They are all indirectly combining, conspiring to suppress the peoples awakening and thereby to fight the Congress and its sympathizers in the CI States Praja Mandal, and lastly to the Congress which all cannot afford to ignore.

I therefore appeal to all the Central India States' Peoples' to watch the Indore movements and be prepared to face the situation. I also appeal to the Indore Praja Mandal to give correct lead to the people and not to sidetrack any real issue whereby the State authorities may suppress the agitation. The Praja Mandal must stand with the Hartal Committee and support all such demands of that Committee, which are in the best interest of the public and the movement.

8. Jobat State and my arrest: Press Statement by K.L. Vaidya

AISPC Papers, *Madhya Bharat*, File No. 106, NMML

Dohad

22 August 1939

On the 15th instant when I was talking with few cultivators of Jobat State village Ablod, with a view to know their present famine condition and the condition of the State Administration, two Police Constables with loaded guns arrived there and seized my papers. On being challenged they were unable to give any satisfactory explanation, except that the Inspector of Police has ordered them to do so and bring such person to Jobat.

The head constables were unable to read my notes, so they asked a boy who was accompanying them, to read the same and afterwards ordered me to come to Jobat. On my asking them to give me a written order or show me the necessary warrant or order, one of them said: 'You are now under my custody and my order is enough, the necessary order or warrant will be shown to you at

Jobat.' Thus I was forced to go to Jobat with them. All the persons who had assembled there were also ordered to come to Jobat. Two labourers who were guiding me in the jungle were also compelled to come to Jobat. I was asked to sit on my horse. A rope was tied in the neck of the horse and a poor cultivator 'Begari' was ordered to take the rope in his hand all through the way.

I tried my best to persuade them not to do such illegal acts as I had not committed any offence, and if at all they want that I should meet the police officer, I am prepared to stay for few hours in the village, one of them may go and inform the police officer and bring him or the necessary warrant. But all was in vain. They were not prepared to listen to anything, except that I must go to Jobat like a prisoner in their custody. My luggage was lying in another village and I had not taken even my bath or morning meal. The constables did not make any arrangements for my bath or meal but ordered that everything will be arranged at Jobat which was nearly five miles.

Like a prisoner I was taken to Jobat where we reached nearly at 1 p.m. I was taken to the police kotwali and was asked to sit outside the Hawalat room in custody of the police guard.

After some fifteen minutes the Police Inspector, who is the head of the Police Department of the Jobat State, arrived there and asked me to come in the office. He told me that I was intending to see you and I am pleased that you are here. I protested against the illegal acts and told him that, is this the way in which you are treating the visitors? How you have ordered to your subordinates to do such illegal acts? The Inspector told me that the explanation given by the constables is false. He had not ordered to anyone to behave or act illegally as they have acted in your case.

He arranged for my bath and meals at his residence, consulted the senior officers and returned my seized papers after taking in a written letter from me as to why I am travelling in the State and allowed me and the cultivators to go to the village.

Such is the condition of Civil Liberties and Administration of Jobat State, against which the poor peoples are crying and the Dohad Session of the CI States' People's Conference had passed a resolution for enquiry. As I had not completed my enquiry as yet, I am not giving all the facts about the misrule of Jobat State. If the Police Inspector is correct that he had not ordered to his subordinates to act illegally as they had acted in my case. I am waiting to see what action he or the State is going to take against those constable, whose names, I am told, are Pir Mohammad and Lalloo.

9. Affairs in Rajgarh: Kanhaiyalal Vaidya to Rangildas Kapadia, 4 September 1939

AISPC Papers, File No. 181, Part 2, NMML

*Central India States' People's Conference
C/o Hindi Swarajya, Khandwa, CP
4 September 1939*

Dear Kapadiaji,

I am in receipt of your letter dated the 15 August 1939 and the concerned handbill of Rajgarh State on the 26th instant.

Before two months I too have received the same handbill from Master Bihari Lal of Rajgarh and the Rajgarh Praja Mandal Secretary, Munshi Hamidali (who is now a days in the Rajgarh Jail), advising me not to reply the handbill as it will bring unnecessarily the man in prominence and the useless discussion raised by him will harm the activities of the Praja Mandal. I too was in possession of the facts and therefore agreed with the suggestion of the Secretary Rajgarh Praja Mandal.

Master Biharilal too has left the institution as he has declared in the enclosed handbill's last lines. I therefore do not think it necessary to go into the details of the allegations of Master Beharilal which are baseless and false. However, in short I am giving you some detailed facts about the activities of the Rajgarh Praja Mandal, its workers and the sabotaging activities of Master Biharilal.

The Rajgarh Praja Mandal was formed in the month of May 1938 at Rajgarh and it was working for the welfare of the people. Its preliminary activities were restricted to some representations, and when the activities of Master Biharilal were suspected by the Praja Mandal members he was asked by Sjt Sajjan Singh Vakil, Acting President of the Raigarh Praja Mandal on the 21 December 1938 to handover all papers, money etc. to Munshi Hamidali. He was suspended from Secretaryship and was asked to clarify his position before the Working Committee.

When this quarrel was going on I visited the State, seen all the papers of Mr Biharilal and all the papers in possession of Sjt Sajjan Singh and Munshi Hamidali. I suggested to Master Biharilal to attend the Working Committee meeting and explain the whole situation to which he refused. A public meeting was arranged by Sjt Sajjan Singh and Munshi Hamidali on behalf of the Praja Mandal, where I delivered a public speech and appealed the people to join the Praja Mandal. Master Biharilal too was present in the meeting and desired to say something in the meeting. He was given an opportunity to speak in the meeting. He supported my appeal and assured the people to work with Sjt Sajjan Singh and Munshi Hamidali etc. After this public meeting I consulted the other Praja Mandal members, majority of whom were not in favour of giving any chance to Master Biharilal to work as Secretary. I advised them to accept the suggestion that if he agrees to work as Joint Secretary under President Sjt Sajjan Singh, no action should be taken against him. All of them agreed to this proposal and in the late hours of night when I together with others was taking my food Master Biharilal too, of his own accord, agreed to accept this suggestion with full cooperation of the workers. He also promised not to see the State officers without any reason or without permission of the Praja Mandal office-bearers.

When the whole thing was discussed and it was agreed that as Doctor Kubersingh of Suthalia who was declared by Master Biharilal to be the President of the Praja Mandal from the beginning, but who had denied the knowledge of being the President of the Rajgarh Praja Mandal in writing to Mr Sajjan Singh, Sjt Sajjan Singh will act as President till the new election of Mushy Hamidali as Secretary of the Praja Mandal. Master Biharilal suggested to me that Pandit Ramsewak—a school teacher (a state servant) may be accepted as Vice-President. I opposed this proposal on the ground that I had a talk with the Dewan¹ Rajgarh State on the subject and he has desired that the State servants should not take active part in the Praja Mandal, and so I could not advise the members to accept this proposal. Of course if Pandit Ramsewak is prepared to work in the Praja Mandal and is ready to give up his service (if the State takes objection) then I shall advise the members to accept him as Vice-President. Master told me that we must fight with the State that the State servants must be allowed to take active part in the Praja Mandal. I told him that this suggestion is not practical at this juncture. Even in the face of Munshi Hamidali (who was a State servant at that time), I have a word that he is prepared to give up the State service and work in the Praja Mandal, and only on that condition I had advised the members to select him as the Secretary.

In this way the whole thing was settled in my presence. I left Rajgarh the next day. After few days I received information from the Praja Mandal members that Master Biharilal is not cooperating with the Praja Mandal workers but is indirectly carrying on an anti-Praja Mandal propaganda amongst the people. There are various complaints against Master Biharilal and they can be known or verified through the Rajgarh Praja Mandal members and workers: Mr Madanlal Agarwal, who is a resident of Rajgarh State and is working in the Bombay office of the Jaipur Praja Mandal, Munshi Hamidali Secretary who is rotting in the Rajgarh Jail and Sjt Sajjan Singh Vakil President

whose Sanad has been confiscated by the Rajgarh Dewan and certain other workers of Rajgarh and Biaora can give more facts about the activities of Master Biharilal.

So far as the activities of the Rajgarh Praja Mandal are concerned they were strictly restricted to constitutional, peaceful and legitimate channels. Everything was going on well till the Rajkot affair was going on well. But when the Rajkot affair took a turn the Dewan of Rajgarh State, who is admittedly a gentleman, also changed his attitude towards the Praja Mandal. From that date repression is increasing day by day. The Dewan has imposed restrictions on the public meetings. (Dismissed Munshi Hamidali from the State Service, which is not a matter for complaint). Confiscated the service amount of 300 Rs of Munshi Hamidali, cancelled the Sanad of the President of the Praja Mandal Sjt Sajjan Singh Vakil, arrested Mr Ramnarayan Mishra, and after keeping for one month in the State Jail deported him from the State territory. The Praja Mandal workers were threatened by the State officers if they continue to take part in the Praja Mandal activities. Police was watching and following 24 hours a day all the Praja Mandal workers and members.

I interviewed the Dewan in the last June and tried to persuade him to give up repression but to no result. From the beginning I assured the Dewan whenever I met him that the Praja Mandal will work with cooperation and on peaceful, legitimate lines for achieving Responsible Government in Rajgarh State. But the Dewan told me that the Praja Mandal must not take any active part in the subjects of day to day activities, neither it should enroll new members but should be silent. I told him that I could not agree to such proposals as to accept your proposal is nothing but a death blow to the Praja Mandal and the political activities of Rajgarh State. I told the Dewan to stop the lawless activities of the police department and he promised to stop it. But after my departure from Rajgarh I had received regular reports that the lawless activities of the police Department were increasing day by day.

The Central India States' People Conference at its Dohad session and the Working Committee at its Khandwa session have passed resolutions for Rajgarh, which condemned the repressive activities and have requested the Dewan to stop repression, but no result. The repression is increasing. In the last month Munshi Hamidali, the Secretary, has been arrested. Few other persons connected with Praja Mandal are arrested, others are harassed by the police. Praja Mandal literature is confiscated and searches were made. Every day the repression is increasing.

On my return from the States tour I too had received an order from the Biaora magistrate banning my entry into the Rajgarh territory under Section 144.

Such is the condition of the Rajgarh affairs. Every one is charging me.

Master Biharilal (who is suspected by the Praja Mandal workers, members and the people) is charging me that I am responsible for the hit the Praja Mandal has received. He is defending the State Dewan.

The Biaora Magistrate charges me that 'whenever you visited this State in the past you tried to stir up trouble among different classes of the subjects of the Rajgarh State by mischievous agitation and malicious propaganda.'

Both the charges are wrong and groundless. The State on the one hand, and to some extent Master Biharilal, are responsible for the present repression. Still, it seems, the Master is defending the Dewan and the Dewan is defending the Master.

As far as my activities are concerned I have been so mild in actions, speeches, writings and advises that Mr Madanlal Agarwal (who is a resident of Rajgarh State and a sincere and honest public worker, and who has got every right to criticise the activities of the State Administration as well the Praja Mandal) has recently charged me that 'I had not the hope that everything which is heard about you will be found true, but looking to your long silence in the Rajgarh affair it is proved that you are not going to take any interest in the Rajgarh affairs'. This charge is also based

on misleading and baseless information but I do not mind such things. In the public life we have to hear everyone and face all sorts of sincere criticism. So far as Mr Madanlal is concerned I do not suspect any bad motive, but so far as the other two, the Rajgarh State officers and Master Biharilal are concerned, I suspect something. Under such circumstances in the interest of the Rajgarh Praja Mandal, Rajgarh people and the Conference, I agree with the request of Master Biharilal for making an impartial inquiry into the whole affair, if such inquiry is acceptable to the Rajgarh State authorities.

I am enclosing herewith a copy of the Order of the Biaora magistrate and a copy of the letter sent by me on the 26th August to the Dewan of Rajgarh State.

I hope you will inform me about the action you propose to take in the above matter. Awaiting to hear from you soon in the matter.

Thanking you in anticipation.

Yours sincerely,

¹ Thakur Devisingh, a judicial officer of Mhow, is the President and Dewan of the State Council of Rajgarh.

10. Affairs in Narsingarh: Kanhaiyalal Vaidya to
Rangildas Kapadia, 29 September 1939

AISPC Papers, File No. 181, part 2, NMML

*Central India States' People Conference
Camp Shujalpur, CI
29 September 1939*

Sjt Rangildas Bhai

I was advised by Mahatmaji to accompany Rajkumari Amrit Kaur in her Narsingarh tour and help her in the enquiry of the alleged suppression of civil liberties in Narsingarh State.

I arrived (Narsingarh State)¹ there on the 19th and Rajkumari Amrit Kaur on the 20th. She was received on the Bhopal Railway Station by all our prominent Praja Mandal workers of Bhopal and Rajgarh. At Narsingarh we both were State guests. We interviewed the Dewan,¹ Maharaja Shree Vikram Singhji² and prominent workers—Rajkumari was convinced about the allegations made in our Conference resolution dated the 17 July 1939. We were prepared for complete enquiry of the whole case but the State was not prepared for such an enquiry. This suggestion was submitted to Rajkumari and was accepted by us as there was no dispute about those allegations of civil liberties. The State Dewan and the Maharaja assured us for civil liberties, constructive work,—Harijan, Khadi and education—agreed to the formation of Narsingarh State Praja Mandal, and also agreed that political work, through constitutional, peaceful and legitimate means can be carried on under the supervision of the State's People's Conference. This was accepted by the State and the whole affair was settled honourably. A document containing all these and other terms was drafted and signed by the State Dewan which is in the hands of Mahatmaji. Now it depends on Mahatmaji what course he adopts for all the above activities.

In this way the Narsingarh matter was settled very favourably, while the neighbouring Rajgarh State is bent on brutal repression of the Praja Mandal and its workers. I am addressing again today a second letter to the Dewan Saheb of Rajgarh State and enclosing a copy of the same to you for your information. I am informed by Shree Madanlalji that Shree Jainarayanji Vyas is going to Rajgarh to investigate into all the matters. I was staying here for the last four days and have

studied the activities of the Rajgarh people, State servants and our friend Master Biharilal. I had a frank talk with Shree Biharilalji yesterday and day before yesterday in the presence of Shree Madanlalji. Even today he has invited both of us to take our meals with him but still his activities are suspected by the Rajgarh and Shujalpur people. My own experience is that he is engaged in sabotaging activities. Today, I am leaving this place and, after staying for two days at Ujjain, going to Khandwa. At Khandwa our Working Committee meeting will be held on the 4th October under the Presidentship of Acharya Shree Narendra Devji.

One thing I will say here about the activities of Master Biharilal. In Shujalpur, where he is working on a petrol agent's shop, he is staying with a favourite of Rajgarh State. The proprietor of the petrol shop is a man who is in good books of the Rajgarh, Narsingarh and other neighbouring State officers. At Shujalpur every day the police officers and servants of Rajgarh State police are in touch with our friend Master Biharilal. Yesterday two police servants of Rajgarh State arrived here to know the names etc. of myself and Shree Madanlalji. Both of them consulted Master Biharilal for more than one hour. A number of respectable merchants and members of the local mandi committee had witnessed all acts.

Still Master Biharilal claims that Shree Hamidali and others who have sacrificed for the Praja Mandal cause should not be entrusted with the Praja Mandal work, but the work should be entrusted to him as he has sacrificed much for it. I do not know and perhaps the Rajgarh people do not know what sort of sacrifice our friend Biharilal has made for the Praja Mandal. He is a man who does not believe in discipline, but always acts like a dictator. It was he who canvassed in Rajgarh at the time of our Ludhiana session that we must not cooperate with the All India States' People's Conference, and when he failed in all his dirty attempts, he has, without referring the matter to the head office, issued handbills against the Praja Mandal and myself. These are all nothing but most mischievous activities and I am sure that he has strengthened the hands of the Rajgarh Administration and helped indirectly to suppress the Praja Mandal and those workers who were sincere and were not prepared to act on his dictation, but who had exposed him and saved the Praja Mandal from the reactionary group.

Under such circumstances I am of opinion that no importance should be attached to Master Biharilal in Praja Mandal activities, nor should he be entrusted with any sort of responsibility in Praja Mandal. But after the investigation of Sjt Vyasji, necessary action should be taken against him with a view to teach lessons to others.

Hoping to be excused for the trouble.

Yours truly,

¹ Dewan Munshi Brahma Dina.

² Shri Vikram Singhji, b. 1909; succeeded to the throne, 1924; invested with full powers 1929; educated at Daly college, Indore, and Mayo College, Ajmer; received administrative training in Mysore State; married daughter of ruler of Cutch State

11. Repression in Central India States

Bombay Chronicle, 22 November 1939

22 November 1939

As soon as the Congress Working Committee decided at its Wardha meeting to accept the decision of resigning from the Provincial Ministries, the Indian States Council of Central India and particularly those States where the administration is carried on by the Minority councils or councils

under the supervision of the Political Department, have changed their attitude towards the people's movement. That repression is going on in most of the Central Indian States is the general complaint of all the Praja Mandal and political workers to the Office of the Central India States' People Conference. The Political department and the Central India rulers are, it seems, united in challenging out a repressive policy against the workers and office-bearers of the Central India States' People Conference with the result that everywhere the public is facing repression, and most of the members of the Working Committee of the Central India States' People Conference are in different jails of Central India.

It is definitely known that the Conference has advised all the workers of the Central Indian States, and the Praja Mandal to follow the line of the All-India States' People's Conference and the All India Congress Committee. The States' workers everywhere in Central India are condemning the attitude of the Bikaner Ruler as the State people generally are dissatisfied with the provocative remarks of the Maharaja for the All India States' People's Conference. Most of the workers of the CI States have requested the Central office to refute the statement and protest against such remarks. The following is the summary of the situation.

Gwalior

The State has appointed a Franchise Committee commanding no public support. The Sarwajanik Sabha has boycotted the Franchise Committee and it is understood that the State is going to force the unacceptable reforms. Sjt Kuskamant Jain been detained in Ujjain on baseless allegations.

Indore

Sjt Hiralal Jadia, member of the Working Committee of the Central India States' People Conference, and another young worker, Sjt Gokulchias Dhoot, are detained in State Jails without trial. A number of leading daily and weekly newspapers are banned and the Praja Mandal activities are suppressed all over the States.

Dhar

The Dhar people are entirely dissatisfied with the present minority Council rule of the Nadkar Dewan.¹

Rutlam

The policy of kick and kiss is followed by the State. Sjt Sobhagmal Porwad, after passing his three month's jail period, has again joined the Praja Mandal activities. Section 144 has been promulgated for public receptions, etc.

Rajgarh

This is another State where minority administration is going on and the Rajgarh people are facing repression all over the State. Sjt Hamidali, General Secretary and member of the Central India States' People Conference, has been convicted to undergo one and half years' rigorous imprisonment. Public meetings are banned, the provincial secretary's entry has been banned and certain newspapers are banned. Great dissatisfaction is prevailing against the Council Rule all over the State.

Sitamau

The Praja Mandal activities are suppressed, and under Defence of India Act all activities, meetings, processions, etc., are banned for one year. Even the Gandhiji Jayanti was banned in the State.

Samthar

Severe type of repression of Praja Mandal workers and peasants is going on all over the State.

Orchha

The State has started new institutions all over the State under the name of Rapa Praja Mandals and State servants and loyalists are elected to three Praja Mandals. After the election, a mock Council has been established and inaugurated on the Dashera Day. The Secretary of the Bundelkhand Congress Committee has been arrested and repression of Praja Mandal and Congress activities is going on as usual.

Dalia

Congress political activities are suppressed and people are harassed for payment of unbearable taxes. Similarly repression is going on in Sarila and other smaller States of Bundelkhand and Baghelkhand area of the central India.

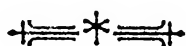
Narsingarh

The State has accepted the conditions of the Central India States' People Conference and has entered into an agreement with the Provincial Secretary of the Conference, Shree Kanhaiyalal Vaidya, and Shreemati Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, who were deputed by Mahatma Gandhi to enquire into the alleged complaints of suppression of Civil Liberties in the Narsingarh States. The allegations were proved beyond doubt and the state had to agree to give all sorts of facilities to the Conference for carrying on constructive and political activities in the State. Full civil liberties were promised. The Conference is considering to chalk out a line for work in Narsingarh and Agarkar will issue a statement on the whole situation. Meanwhile the State officers had joined actively in the elections of an institution named Mitra Mandal and has captured the institution by turning out some of the Mitra Mandal workers.

Bhopal

In Bhopal, too, orders under Section 144 and Defence of India Act are promulgated banning all meetings, processions and political activities in Bhopal State. Under the Defence of India Act two members of the Working Committee of the Central India States' People Conference, Chaturarayan Malviya, President of the Bhopal Rajya Praja Parishad, and Janab Shakir Ali Khan, ex-President of Bhopal Rajya Praja Parishad, along with other responsible public workers, have been arrested and detained in the Sehore Jail since last one month.

¹ Dewan Bahadur K. Nadkar, Dewan and President, Council of Administration of State; carrying on minority Council rule as Anand Rao Puar, b. 1920, still a minor.



VIII ORISSA: RANPUR

1. Report on the Ranpur Incident

AICC Papers, File No. G-35, part 6, 1939, NMML

n.d. (probably)

6 January 1939

Ranpur is a very small state in Orissa under the Eastern States Agency, having an area of 203 sq. miles with a population of 47,713. The annual revenue of the State is Rs 77,000 out of which Rs 2,000 is paid to British government as tribute. The police force comprises 42 men.

The State is all along notorious for mal-administration and for the existence of many old uncivilized practices and customs. This will be proved from the demands of the people which in some cases have been partially conceded by the Ruler in his several declarations. The demands include abolition of restrictions on the use of palanquins, horses, music in marriage ceremonies, double door-shutters in houses, ornaments etc. Besides, compulsory labour even without wages, forced supply of food-stuff to officers and the palaces, forced contributions towards the expenses of several ceremonies in the palace and interference in social matters are in full force in Ranpur as in many other States in Orissa. As regards the general administration in the State, the demand of the people was to dismiss the Dewan against whom there were very serious charges of corruption. Praja Mandal, the peoples' organisation, was formed in the first week of October 1938 and the demands were formulated.

These demands were sent to the Ruler in the form of a respectful representation on the 4th November and a copy of this representation was sent to the Political Agent. On the 10th November, a reminder was sent to the Ruler and also to the Political Agent. On the 20th November, the Ruler convened a meeting of the people to discuss the representation submitted by the Praja Mandal. No decision could be reached that day, so another meeting was held on the 25th November. In the meantime, the Dewan was asked to go on leave by the Ruler and subsequently it was declared that the services of the Dewan had been dispensed with.

On the 26th November, a declaration was made granting certain minor concessions. On the 28th the Praja Mandal again submitted a representation to the Ruler expressing their dissatisfaction with the declaration and a copy of this representation was also sent to the Political Agent. On the 3rd December another declaration was made by the Ruler granting some more concessions. On the 17th December the Praja Mandal expressed dissatisfaction at the declaration, submitted further representation to the Ruler and a copy of the representation was sent as usual to the Political Agent. On the 27th December a further declaration was made granting some more concessions.

In the meantime section of the people broke away from the Praja Mandal and held a meeting on the 29th December denouncing the method of representation. In this meeting some violent speeches were reported to have been made on the other side also. The Ruler seemed determined not to grant any more concessions. Mr Daubney, the Asst. Political Agent visited Ranpur on the 31st December and convened a meeting of the people. In this meeting in the presence of the Asst. Political Agent, the Asst. Dewan warned the people to dissolve the Praja Mandal immediately.

On the 2nd January 1939, the Praja Mandal was declared unlawful. This exasperated the public opinion everywhere and everything was attributed to the Asst. Political Agent's intervention in favour of the Ruler without any enquiry into the representation of the people, copies of which used to be forwarded to the Political Agent.

This President of the Praja Mandal and the treasurer came to Cuttack for consultation when on the 4th January the news reached them that some arrests had been made and the houses of some had been looted and the people were in a very much excited mood.

On the 5th January a large crowd collected at Ranpur to make a demonstration before the palace against the arrests made and to demand the release of the arrested persons. The roads to Ranpur were closed by throwing trees across them and the crowd proceeded towards the palace. In the meantime the Ruler sent word to the Political Agent who was at Nayagarh about 10 miles off from Ranpur. On receiving the news, the Political Agent came to Ranpur and held consultations with the Ruler and the Asst. Dewan. At a short distance the crowd was shouting and slowly moving towards the palace. About ten armed police constables were present at the palace. It is not known how the Political Agent, a supervising authority as he is, came into the crowd and why the armed police were not sent if some violence was apprehended from the mob. Anyhow, the Political Agent went out to the crowd accompanied by the Subedar of Nayagarh. It is not known what actually happened when the Political Agent met the crowd. From all reports available, it appears that the Political Agent used his revolver to strike terror into the hearts of the crowd, who on the contrary, became infuriated and attacked the Political Agent. The result was that two from the crowd were shot dead and the Political Agent was killed. The Subedar was seriously wounded.

On enquiry at the spot, it is learnt that no step whatsoever was taken by the Durbar to stop the people from collecting at Ranpur or to disperse the crowd in time.

Sd

To,
The Secretary AICC
Camp. Bardoli.

2. On Major Bazalgette's Death: Statement issued to the Press by Sarandadhar Das, Secretary, Orissa States People Conference
AISPC Papers, File No. 5, NMML

6 January 1939

I am deeply shocked to learn of the death at Ranpur Garh of Major Bazalgette, the Political Agent, Sambalpur, and two Ranpur subjects yesterday. The act of violence committed on the late Major cannot be too severely condemned. Although the details of the incident are not available, it is understood that he fell a victim to mob frenzy in this small State and it is clear that the persons responsible for this desperate act did not realise that the consequences it would have on their cause and that of the peoples of other States in Orissa. The whole policy of the Rulers in most of the Orissa States had been to provoke the people to violence by all conceivable means at their disposal, so that their own sins may not come to light. It is a pity that some ignorant and immature persons in Ranpur have so easily played into their hands. For the time being, the hands of the rulers and their supporters have been strengthened, and a situation has been created which compels me to advise the people of the different States in Orissa not to launch upon any mass movement of direct action in the present circumstances. I hope my humble advice will also be followed by the peoples of the States which are now engaged in mass movements. Orissa States' People Conference policy is one of non-interference in the affairs of the different Praja Mandals, and the

responsibility for all movements rests on the respective bodies, I am tendering this advice in anticipation of the sanction of my Committee.

This whole incident is a symptom of the woeful state of affairs prevailing in these States, and however condemnable the act may be, I sincerely trust that the authorities may take a dispassionate view of the matter, and bring about a permanent solution of the States Peoples' problems.

3. Jawaharlal Nehru condemns Ranpur Incident

Bombay Chronicle, 9 January 1939: See also *SWJN*, Vol. 9, pp. 410–11 for Nehru's signed article on the Ranpur incident in *National Herald* of 12 January 1939 .

Allahabad
8 January 1939

'It is a folly and crime against our movement to indulge in acts which injure the cause itself and bring discredit on it,' observes Pt Jawaharlal Nehru in a statement on the recent Ranpur incident.

Pt Nehru says: 'I regret deeply the killing of Maj. Bazalgette by a crowd in Ranpur. Whatever the circumstances attending on this, such acts of violence by crowds will cause great injury to the movement for emancipation in the States. which is and must be based on peaceful methods. Every one knows that in some of the Orissa States people have been shamefully treated by the authorities there and there is great resentment against this treatment.¹ But it is a folly and crime against our movement.... I trust this tragic incident will be a warning to us in all the States.'

¹ When thousands had migrated from areas like Dhenkanal and Talcher, due to policy of severe repression, a demand came from the rulers for the extradition from the provinces to the States of the leaders of this exodus, so that they might be made to suffer for their opposition to the State administration. See *LAR* Vol. 2, 1939, p. 442.

4. Bose's Warning against use of Violence

Times of India, 9 January 1939

Wardha
9 January 1939

Mr Subhas Chandra Bose, Congress President, has issued the following statement:

'The murder of Major R.L. Bazalgette, Political Agent, Orissa States, in Ranpur State the other day, demands serious notice not only of the subjects of the States but also of the people of British India.

In view of the increasing sympathy and interest shown by the Indian National Congress in the affairs of the States people it is but natural that happenings in one Indian State should have repercussions not only in other States but also throughout British India.

The Congress can extend its moral sympathy and support to the movement of the States' peoples only if that movement is conducted in accordance with the principles and policy of the Congress.

The Ranpur incident has come as a grave warning to all those who are interested in Indian mass movement, whether in the states or in British India. Apart from carrying out a searching investigation into the Ranpur incident, everything possible should be done to render impossible a repetition of such an outbreak of violence.

Newspaper reports give one the impression that the mob in Ranpur were subjected to provocation in as much as they had been fired upon. But no provocation, however great, can have

an excuse for a departure from non-violence which should be the basic principle of the Indian mass movement.

'I am glad to know that responsible public men in Orissa have already realised the seriousness of the situation and are taking the necessary steps. Our sympathy naturally goes to the members of the bereaved family and also to those who may have suffered injuries on the occasion.'

5. Another Chauri Chaura

Editorial, *National Front*, 15 January 1939

15 January 1939

The blood-curdling happenings in the Orissa States found their culmination in the retaliation by the masses on the 5th of January. On that day a procession of Ranpur State people demanding the immediate release of recently arrested political was marching to the palace. It was met by the Political Agent, Major Bazalgette, who tried to 'pacify' the crowd in the traditional British official way. Contemptuous of the masses and utterly ignorant of new ideals of freedom and liberty that urged the hearts of the thousands, the Major pulled out his revolver and killed two of the processionists. The crowd retaliated with lathis and stones and the Major was killed on the spot.

This solitary instance of retaliation under grave provocation and as an act of self-defence has sent a strange wave of nervousness in responsible quarters. The incident has been magnified into an act of major importance and loud condemnations of the act have been broadcast, chastising the Ranpur processionists as perpetrators of a grave and wanton crime.

'The Congress can extend its moral sympathy and support to the movement of the States people only if that movement is conducted in accordance with the principles and policy of the Congress,' warns Sjt Bose. 'It is a folly and a crime against the movement to indulge in acts which injure the cause itself and bring discredit on it,' comments Jawaharlal Nehru. Sjt Harekrishna Mehtab advises suspension of the struggle. And finally Sjt Sarandadhar Das, Secretary Orissa States' People Conference, advises 'the people of the different States in Orissa not to launch upon any mass movement of direct action in the present circumstances.'

The circle is complete. Comments range from condemnation to withdrawal of the struggle. What the Major could not achieve through his bullets is sought to be done through his dead body.

Do the people of Ranpur deserve this condemnation? Those thousands who marched in procession with the one aim of demanding the release of their comrades—were they the guilty party to be branded as criminals by respected leaders?

These condemnations totally ignore the background of the happening of 5th January, which constituted the culmination of the unspeakable brutalities practiced on the Orissa States people during the past few months.

Not a single crime has been left uncommitted by the State authorities during these fateful days. Women's modesty has been outraged. Houses have been looted and wanton destruction spread everywhere. In Dhenkanal alone there was firing on seven occasions, killing nineteen and wounding 115. Hundreds were victims of lathi charges and spear wounds. Even children were not immune from these atrocious attacks. On occasion they were specially singled out in order to terrorise their parents.

Twenty thousands from Talcher ran away to the adjoining British territory. The State authorities charged their leaders with theft, offences against women and other criminal sections to get them extradited to the State territory. Major Bazalgette certified these charges against respected leaders of the people and was very active in demanding their return.

It is these atrocious happenings that formed the background of the Ranpur incident.

The Orissa people were human beings, with feelings for their mothers and daughters, for their wives and children. The Major's shots costing two innocent lives—blood of their own blood—were too much for them. Their accumulated wrath and discontent knew no bounds. The released with all the fury generated by the unspeakable brutalities of the past few months.

One will sympathize with the Major's family. One will bewail the tragic fate of the British official, whose contempt for the masses cost him his life. To condemn the people however is an outrage against the monumental patience hitherto shown by them. It is an outrage against every feeling of the decency when one realises what they have passed through all these months.

To hold the Ranpur people responsible for the tragic happenings under these circumstances is to ignore the basic background of the situation. They were no more responsible for the death of the Major than for the deaths of the two persons shot by the Major's revolver. The guilt lies with the State authorities who have let loose sadistic terror on the people, counting on the usual and exemplary patience. Those who forget that they are dealing with human beings and practice unheard of brutalities on the people have no right to complain against the results of their own atrocities.

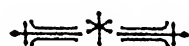
The issue is of immediate practical importance to this country. Sooner or later a gigantic mass struggle is bound to develop against British Imperialism. The dimensions of the struggle could exceed the fondest dreams of the most optimistic prophets. Unheard of terror, the like of which has not been seen in this country, will be let loose upon the people. Atrocities, terror, tortures, all will be there taxing the last ounce of the people's patience. And the masses in these circumstances may at times act as Ranpur people have acted.

Shall we then run away from the contest, condemning the masses for their imperfect 'non-violence' or shall we have the courage to fix the responsibility for such incidents on the authorities which provoke them and carry forward our struggle. Such incidents constitute mere ripples and have to be treated as such. They are incidental and not fundamental.

True non-violence on the other hand demands a severe condemnation of state violence, which leads to such incidents. It is the violence of the State, carried to extremes, that produces such incidents, and unless public opinion is fully mobilized against state violence, a true non-violence atmosphere cannot be created

We on our part beg to offer our full sympathies and support to the people of Ranpur. We know that they were not really responsible for the incident of 5th January. We especially declare our sympathies for the two fighters who were killed by the Major's bullets. They will forever remain enshrined in the hearts of all fighters, though their names have not been even mentioned in the press statement.

To talk of withdrawal of the struggle because of this incident is a retreat before realities. No principle however sacred justifies such a stand. The Orissa States' people put up with the unspeakable brutalities not to suspend the fight but to win it. To stop their heroic march at this stage, because of the tragic happenings of 5th January, is to betray them. Let not history repeat itself. Let not a minor incident be magnified into a big issue as has happened in connection with the Chauri Chaura affair. No more Chauri Chauras! Stand firmly by the Ranpur masses! Victory to the Orissa States' people! These ought to be our fighting slogans.



Rajnandgaon, Keonjhar and Talcher

1. Repression in Rajnandgaon

Bombay Chronicle, 6 January 1939

Durg
5 January 1939

Four hundred men, it is understood, have been injured, of whom eight seriously, in the disturbances at Rajnandgaon yesterday when police forcibly dispersed the demonstrators. Six arrests were made.

The hartal, to register public protest against the repressive measures adopted by the State authorities, continues.

The Rajnandgaon Merchants' Association, it is gathered, have sent telegrams to HE the Viceroy, Mahatma Gandhi, Mr Subhas Chandra Bose, and the Resident of the Eastern States Agency, drawing their attention to the situation and appealing for intervention and demanding institution of an independent inquiry into the incidents.

Meanwhile the leaders have advised the people to continue the struggle in a spirit of non-violence.

2. Hare Krushna Mehtab's Statement

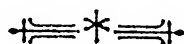
Hindu, 18 January 1939

18 January 1939

Mr Hare Krushna Mehtab, Orissa member of the Congress Working Committee, who arrived here today from Cuttack, called on the Resident, Eastern States Agency, in Calcutta and discussed with him the present situation in the Orissa States.

Later, Mr Mehtab had a long talk with Mr Subhas Chandra Bose, Congress President, on the same subject. Mr Hare Krushna Mehtab also had interviews with the Secretary to the Resident and the new Political Agent for Orissa States.

Although the nature of the talks is not yet known, it is believed in political circles that they may result in easing to a great extent the tense situation now prevailing in the States. 'Sending troops to Orissa and making Cuttack their base for ensuring law and order in the States will cause irritation no doubt among all sections of the public and at the same time, this will not solve the problem', says Mr Hare Krushna Mehtab in a statement to the press. Mr Mehtab adds: 'To secure that willing cooperation of the people in the states, there are various other ways opened to the authorities concerned. The Congress is ready to render all possible assistance to the authorities in securing the willing cooperation of the people by any fair method, which is other than sending troops and thereby trying to create an atmosphere of terror. I am encouraged to think that the Rulers and the Political Department will do all in their power to secure the goodwill of the people by peaceful methods and for that purpose they will not hesitate to seek and accept the assistance of all sections of the public.'



3. Unrest in Orissa States

Hindu, 20 January 1939

20 January 1939

'The Situation is delicate'. This is how the present position of Orissa Province vis-à-vis the unrest in the Orissa States is described in well-informed circles here.

Serious discussions and consultations are in progress among the Ministers, following their recent discussions on the situation in the neighbouring States with the Governor and Mr Hare Krishna Mehtab's return from Calcutta after an interview with the Resident of the Eastern States Agency. The Political Agent for the Orissa States is now in Cuttack.

It is reported that some persons have been arrested in Ranpur in connection with the disturbances which occurred there at the beginning of the month.

The Provincial Congress Committee will meet at Puri tomorrow when, it is understood, important matters concerning that States will be discussed. The meeting is expected to be attended by the Ministers. Mr Andrews, it is understood, addressed the meeting on the present political situation.

The Orissa Congress Parliamentary Party, at its meeting day before yesterday, it is understood, assured the Ministry of its full support with regard to their policy towards the prisoners arrested under extradition warrants from the States.

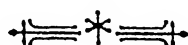
4. Keonjhar an Eye-opener

National Front, 29 January 1939

The shocking events of recent months in the Orissa States have stirred to the depths the entire people of India.

And now comes news of extension of the dreaded arm of repression to the people of Keonjhar State, a major state of the group comprising the Eastern States Agency with a population of about 4,60,000, half of which consists of aborigines. Any movement to voice the grievances of the people of this State has been promptly crushed and all attempts to hold meetings inside the State quashed. Already about 50 leaders have been imprisoned in this way.

A Conference of the Keonjhar people was scheduled to meet in a village outside the State, on its border, on the 9th January last. Immediately the District Magistrate of Cuttack served orders under Section 144 CrPC on the conveners, Coms. Phanindranath Pal, a prominent Kisan leader of Orissa, member of the PCC and a former resident of Keonjhar State, and Laxmidhar Jena and Duryodhan Ray, Secretary and President of the Sukinda State People's Conference, prohibiting them from holding the Conference and further prohibiting Com. Phani Pal from entering the Sukinda Thana for 2 months. On top of all this, 1000 police were posted on the border of the State to prevent the people from coming to the meeting. The District Magistrate himself accompanied the force that went to the place of meeting.



5. Congress on Unrest in Orissa States

Hindustan Times, 13 February 1939

Cuttack
11 February 1939

The unrest in Orissa States was the main subject of discussion at a special meeting of the Congress Parliamentary Party held last night.

The Hon. Mr Biswanath Das, the Prime Minister, explained at length the position of the Orissa Government and the action they had taken in the matter. He stated that the relationship of the Orissa Government with the States was that of a good neighbour. He deplored the strained feelings between the rulers and the ruled in Orissa States, and said that the Provincial Government has represented the matter to the Government of India's Political Department a number of times.

The Hon. Mr Kanungo, the Revenue Minister, gave the meeting a resume of conversations which he had with Mahatma Gandhi and Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel when he last visited Bombay.

Mr Mehtab, the member of the Congress Working Committee, who was present at the meeting, narrated the history of the unrest from the beginning up to date, and said that terrible repression was being carried on in an organised form in the States. The party members were requested to express their opinions on the matters and advise the Ministry as to what course the Ministry should take.

It is understood that the Government have the full support of Mahatma Gandhi and Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel in regard to the Government's sympathetic attitude towards the Talchar refugees, and the unrest in Orissa States in general.

6. Grievances of Orissa States People

Orissa States News Bulletin, AISPC Papers, File No. 127, NMML

27 April 1939

It is understood from reliable sources that, crowds in Gangpur are alleged to be obstructing the arrest of some men, and that presumably at the request of the Gangpur Durbar, about Indian troops left Cuttack and Dhenkanal recently by road via Sambalpur. There being no Praja Mandal in Gangpur, it is difficult to determine the cause of arrest and the necessity for obstruction. Nevertheless, on receipt of information, the Secretary of the Orissa States' People's Conference has wired to friends in Jharsuguda, Sambalpur District to advise people in the State to immediately stop such tactics, as it is contrary to the principles of Ahimsa, and warning that such procedure may result in firing. Definite information on the situation is anxiously awaited.

It is said that some weeks ago troops had similarly gone to Gangpur to help collect rent. The modus operandi is to let the soldiers stand by, while the State Tehsildar or the Quanungo with some Constables attaches properties and auctions them for the collection of rent. It seems absurd that warriors should stoop down to the hum-drum routine business of an ordinary Peon. However, this is one of the many things now happening in the Orissa States in order to drive fear into the people.

Gangpur is the fourth largest State in Orissa bordering the district of Sambalpur, and has an area of 2,492 sq.miles and a population of 3,56,674. The young Raja died last year in England prior to his installation on the Gaddi, and the Maharani Regent is now in charge of the State. On 9 February 1939 the Regent called a meeting at Sargippali where some four or five thousand people from over thirty villages submitted a joint petition to her in which the redress of the following

grievances was prayed for: (1) The land rents of the 1910 settlement to remain in force. (2) The forest rights enumerated in the 1910 settlement be restored. (3) The Chowkidari tax of 12 seers of rice and 3 annas in cash per household be stopped (4) The people to be allowed to use the hide of their own cattle, instead of the monopolist appropriating them to himself. (5) Free transfer of land be allowed without any fee. (6) Total abolition of unpaid forced labour, Bheti (nazarana), imprest provisions, Megan Panch (forcible contributions in cash and kind). (7) Representative Government, in which the people can exercise the vote, to be introduced. (8) Permission to ply bullock carts on the roads built by the State wherever necessary for irrigation purposes. (10) Full right to shoot wild animals that damage and destroy crops. (11) Freedom to sell lac, silk cocoons, cotton seed, Mahua, wax etc. to any merchant in the State. Export taxes should be collected from the merchants on their exports. (12) Cooperative Credit Societies be established. (13) Local people be given preference in State service instead of bringing men from outside. In the end it was prayed that in as much as the people have been greatly impoverished due to low prices for produce, the above items be properly considered, and suitable orders be passed for which the people would remain grateful for ever. It is understood that the Maharani Regent has not yet replied.

It will be noted that the grievances are the same as in most other Orissa States, and the sum total of them has become an intolerable burden on the peasantry. But the enhanced rent effected in the last settlement of 1935 seems to be the greatest hardship which the people are not able to endure. Land that was assessed at Re. 1/9 per acre in 1910 settlement now pays Rs 2/8 (settlement of 1935). In the neighbouring Sambalpur District similar land pays Rs 1/2 per acre. During settlement joint petitions against the abnormal increase was forbidden. Grouping villages was not allowed. Only individual petitions with 12 annas stamps were entertained. Many individuals complained against many irregularities and excesses practiced by the settlement officers. The enhanced rates were also objected to, but it is said, no relief was granted. It may be mentioned here that the rates of rent was doubled without the State having done anything towards the increase of irrigation facilities. It is significant that the present rate in Sambalpur is lower than even the 1910 rates.

There is a large Christian population, mostly converted aboriginals. These Christians of Gangpur and Raibagu Thanas appealed against the abnormal enhancement and did not pay the rent. One of them was imprisoned and another was released on a surety of Rs 50. The late Mr Christian, the then Dewan of the State, was lenient to them. But, after his death, it seems, the arrears of rents are being demanded, and it is said, they still refuse to pay.

It is unfortunate that the legitimate grievance of the people are not being looked into when they are presented to the authorities in the most humble manner, but troops are being requisitioned for every little trivial thing, and mostly with the intention of coercing people to the will of the Durbars. This procedure complicates the situation and may result in immense harm. More detailed information is awaited, but in the meantime it is felt that Gangpur is a State to be watched.

7. M.K. Gandhi on Talcher

CWMG, Vol.69, pp. 268-69

Rajkot
16 May 1939

Talcher promises to be much worse than Rajkot. In Rajkot it was the Ruler's word that was broken. In Talcher it is the Paramount Power's. In Rajkot State atrocities were not the subject of scrutiny. In Talcher the sorry condition of the numerous refugees is almost everything. Hence delay is

criminal and may mean loss of one year's crop to several thousand cultivators. The other relief promised by the Political Agent, Major Hennessey, relates to partly things so far as the Ruler of Talcher is concerned, but they are serious enough for the people. It has been whispered to me that I have been guilty of injustice to Major Hennessey and hence to the Paramount Power by attributing to them breach of promise; for it is said, Major Hennessey promised nothing, he merely undertook to convey to the Ruler the wishes of the people concerned. It is further said that even if it is proved that he made any such promise he did so without authority.

I cannot admit either of the pleas. Major Hennessey signed the document without any reservations. Shri Hare Krishna Mehtab described the tragedy with a wealth of detail which compels conviction. He has been an eye-witness of the events narrated by him. So far as I am aware Major Hennessey himself has never denied or has not been given an opportunity of denying the allegations made about him.

There seems to be no doubt that the Ruler of Talcher is in no mood to do justice to his people unless he is made to act according to the Sanad I have already reproduced in these columns. The representative of the Paramount Power can even require the smaller States of Orissa to perform acts in the interest of their people. Can there be any doubt as to the necessity of redressing every one of the injustices mentioned in the memorandum signed by Major Hennessey? Indeed redress has been long overdue. Why is the Ruler being humoured by the Political Department in his wholly indefensible attitude? Why is the welfare of several thousand refugees being lightly regarded? Is not the prestige of the Paramount Power being used to sustain the admitted evils? Surely there is something radically wrong somewhere in all this.

8. Orissa States

Editorial, *Bombay Chronicle*, 16 August 1939

16 August 1939

The Orissa States are generally little known to the public, but they have leaped into preeminence in recent years owing to grave unrest in several of them as a result of gross mal-administration by the Rulers. The information available to the public about these States is, however, very meagre and not always authentic. The public will, therefore, welcome the appearance of the Report of the Orissa States Enquiry Committee, as considered and approved by the Orissa States Peoples' Conference. The Committee was appointed in June 1937 by the Conference to inquire into allegations of mal-practice in most of the States of Orissa. The Committee, as unavoidably reconstituted later, consisted of Mr Harekrishna Mehtab, a member of the Congress Working Committee. Mr Lalmohan Patnaik, Secretary, Orissa Christian Educational Board, and Mr Balvantray Mehta, member, Servants of the People Society. The Committee examined about 2000 witnesses, investigated at length into every grievance of the people and has produced a comprehensive report of the conditions prevailing in the 26 States of Orissa. The Report, which extends to nearly 300 pages, contains ample evidence to support and substantiate the findings of the Committee. Some of the material at the disposal of the Committee has not so far been published, but we are told it will be published if it is found necessary in the future.

The findings of the Committee make very painful reading, and it is no consolation to know that worse things are common enough in many other states in the country. The Committee finds that in almost every State in Orissa 'there is a crushing system of Taxation with unusually high rents,' that 'civil liberty is crushed' and the people are daily oppressed with a feeling of potential anger to the security of life and property, and that Praja Mandals in almost all States are either

unlawful or unrecognized. One of the worst and commonest grievance is the prevalence of forced labour. 'Peasant spends over one hundred days of the year in doing forced labour for the States or its officials, without any remuneration for it. Often enough he is thus called away at sowing time or in the harvesting season.' The custom accordingly 'keeps him in grinding poverty' and 'prevents his emergence from a state of serfdom.' The Committee has reason to remark that the peasant's plight in Orissa States reminds one of the Austrian peasant who, on the eve of the French Revolution, petitioned his Emperor in the following words: 'Most merciful Emperor, for two days in the week I must accompany the lord when he goes out hunting, for two days I must graze his cattle, for two days I must till his land and the seventh belongs to God. Consider, most merciful Emperor, how can I pay dues and taxes?'

The State of things revealed by the Committee's findings is extraordinary, indeed, and calls for extra-ordinary action. The Committee's recommendations are drastic but not more so than the situation demands. It recommends that the Sanads granted to the Rulers of the States by the Paramount Power should be cancelled, and they must be treated as landlords of permanently settled estates such as Aul, Kujang and Kanika. The Committee declares that the changes can be effected without doing any violence to the rights of these chiefs. Pending the cancellation of the Sanads, the Committee suggests that 'the Governor in the Ministry of the Province of Orissa may be vested with the powers now exercised by the Resident, that is, the power of tendering advice to the rulers of the States under the terms of the Sanads.' The Committee also suggests that till the Sanads are cancelled, effect should be given to the minimum reforms recently recommended by Gandhiji. The Crown Representative will perhaps object that the enquiry on which these recommendations are based is one-sided. But the Committee declares with confidence that any other impartial Commission of Enquiry 'is sure to arrive at the same conclusions', and in fact challenges the authorities concerned to appoint such a Commission 'which would afford to the people all possible facilities for representation without any let or hindrance'. The least that the higher authorities should do at once is to appoint a Commission as demanded and grant to the people of the States the minimum reforms recommended by Gandhiji. The public will accept as accurate the findings of the present Committee till they find it necessary to change their views in the light of the fuller inquiry.

IX HYDERABAD

1. The 'Bande Mataram' Controversy

Sir Akbar Hydari talks to the Action Committee, *Hindu*, 2 January 1939

2 January 1939

The talks for arriving at a compromise¹ between the students and the authorities, started by Nawab Mehdi Nawaz Jung, Municipal Commissioner, broke down after the interview the Committee of Action had with Sir Akbar Hydari at his son's bungalow at Lalaguda on Saturday evening.

What actually transpired between the students and the Chancellor of the University is not known, but it is reliably understood that when the students asked for the ban on 'Bande Mataram' song being removed, Sir Akbar seems to have informed them that there was no ban on the singing of the 'Bande Mataram' song by individual students, but the ban was on the singing of the song collectively and as a body as a part of religious prayer. He would have no objection to the students singing the song on social occasion but the University has to see that it was not sung collectively and as a body by the Hindu students which was likely to offend Muslim sentiments. Sir Akbar is

understood to have told the students that he himself was a great admirer of Bankim Chandra⁴ and has great regard for his writings, but the University authorities had to see that they did not give room for ill-feeling between students belonging to different communities. Sir Akbar is stated to have added that the students should realise that though Nagpur University might take them in for the present, it was not the Nagpur Government that was going to absorb them.

The students did not give a definite reply to Sir Akbar first and after consultation with their colleagues decided not to accept the terms of the Chancellor.

The first batch of about twenty students are leaving for Nagpur this evening. They will arrange for boarding and lodging and call the rest of the students, all of whom will join their classes at Nagpur before 8th January. The detailed programme issued by the strikers gives instructions to students at Aurangabad and Warangal about the expenditure, etc., for pursuing studies at Nagpur.

The Committee of Action members will leave Hyderabad on 9th January after making arrangements for the rest.

The students all over the state were made to sing a song to the Asfia dynasty. One day the entire body of a students refused to sing the Asafia Song and recited 'Vande Mataram'. The authorities could not tolerate this and banned the song 'Vande Mataram'. G.M. Shroff, a member of the staff helped to organise the student movement.

⁴ Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyaya (1838–1894) edu. first graduate of the Calcutta University; completed B.L. in 1869, became Deputy Magistrate, creative writer and thinker; author of *Indira*, *Chandrashekar*, *Anandamath*, *Rajsinha* and the famous song 'Bande Mataram'

2. The 'Bande Mataram' Controversy:

Statement issued by the Committee of Action

Hindu, 5 January 1939

5 January 1939

The Committee of Action regrets very much to announce that the Government have not been moved by the repeated appeals regarding the removal of the ban imposed on the singing of 'Bande Mataram' song. In their appeal, the statement that the song has become part of their prayers has apparently been misunderstood in some quarters and the authorities also made it an argument against them and are reported to have decided that the ban is not going to be lifted. The statement that it has become part of their prayers requires a little historical survey to be completely understood. About four years ago, when the problem of common prayer for Hindu students was at issue in the Hostel, it was found that the National song, 'Bande Mataram', being the prayer of motherland had all the qualities necessary to satisfy the conscience of different schools of thought and various sections of students. The National character of the song was an asset to inspire confidence in all sections and hence the 'Bande Mataram' song was adopted as part of their common prayer. The students have since then been singing it and it has, therefore, come to occupy a position as part of their daily prayer. They never meant that the song itself was religious or that it was an integral part of the prayer of every Hindu. What they maintained and still maintain is that the song has formed for the last four years part of their daily prayers by common consent and the national character or non-religious nature of the song cannot be a bar to its being sung by students as part of their daily prayers. It cannot for that reason be a justification for the imposition of the ban by the Government.

To avoid any possible ambiguity, we reiterate our belief in the national character of the song, 'Bande Mataram' which stands for love of motherland whose prestige no Indian should suffer to be lowered.

The Government not having chosen to reconsider their orders or modify them, we have decided with the utmost regard to bid good-bye to our alma mater—the Usmania University—till justice to our demand is recognised. We are sure the Government and the public will realise that this most unpleasant alternative has been forced on us and if our case had been considered with the sympathy that it deserves, we would never have decided on an exodus to outside educational institutions.

About hundred students are leaving today for Nagpur and the rest will be leaving before the 10th instant.

3. Hindu Mahasabha's Resolution:

B.S. Moonje to Sir Akbar Hydari, 11 January 1939

File No. 695, Vol. I, Constitutional Affairs Department, Nizam's Government, Andhra Pradesh State Archives. The Moonje-Hydari Correspondence is drawn from the same file.

Nasik

11 January 1939

Dear Right Hon'ble Sir Akbar Hydari,

I trust you have learnt from newspapers that the Hindu Mahasabha has in its annual session held recently in Nagpur passed a resolution, adopting Satyagraha for redress of grievances of the Hindu subjects of the State and for establishment of Responsible Government.

I have been appointed a member of the committee along with others for conducting the Satyagraha movement.

Personally I should like to repeat my request which I had made last year for permission to make personal enquiries in respect of the grievances of the Hindu subjects of the State. But last year you were not pleased to take any notice of my request; but still I think it advisable in view of our personal acquaintance to repeat my request again this time.

4. Hindu Mahasabha Grievances.

Akbar Hydari to B.S. Moonje, 30 January 1939

File No. 695, Vol. I. Constitutional Affairs Department, Nizam's Government, A.P. State Archives

Dear Dr Moonje,

Many thanks for your letter dated the 24 January 1939 and for the copy of your letter to me dated the 30 January 1938. As I have already indicated I never received that letter; otherwise, I would have replied to it at the time.

You refer in your letter dated the 11 January 1939 to a request made by you for permission to make personal enquiries in respect of alleged grievances of the Hindu subjects of the State. I do not find that request in the copy of the letter you have sent which only deals with the request that a deputation of the Hindu Mahasabha may be permitted to place such grievances formally before Government. I take it that this is still the object with which you have now written.

The State does not recognise the right of any organisation or individual, not owing allegiance to the State or functioning beyond its borders, to represent the people of the State or to deal with Government in respect of matters concerning the State or its subjects. I think, however, that your object will be fulfilled by my informing you of the plans which government has in view, the details of which will be announced when the reforms proposals are made public. I do not think this will

take more than a few months. These plans include the establishment of a machinery, which should command the confidence of the public of Hyderabad, to ascertain whatever religious grievances a community may allege and to suggest to Government remedial measures for removing such grievances. As I wrote to Mr Savarkar in reply to a recent letter from him, our scheme of reforms will not be confined to the constitutional sphere alone but will cover a sphere wide enough to include such legitimate grievances as may be felt by any single community, no matter whether Hindu or Muslim or any other, and which will not be confined to it and are not part and parcel of any rules or laws applicable to the whole of the Dominions and to all the subjects of the State without distinction of caste or creed. As regards grievances other than religious, I am certain that the settlement contemplated in the reforms announcement as a whole will satisfy the interests concerned as well as all the requirements of progress.

If, in addition, there is any other matter which you desire to bring to my personal notice, I hope you will not hesitate to write to me about it.

5. Hyderabad

CWMG, Vol. 68, pp. 407-08

Seagaon

12 February 1939

Hyderabad State Congress people are getting restive. As they have been acting under my advice some of them came to me and said, 'We have suspended civil disobedience at your and other leaders' instance. You have held out the hope that, if we suspended civil disobedience, most probably the prisoners would be released and the State Congress recognised. Neither the one nor the other has happened. How long are we to remain out and vegetate while our co-workers are rotting in the State jails where life is none too easy? What will you have us do?'

As these friends have to deal with a large number of colleagues I had better give a summary of my answer to them. I said:

I sympathise with you. In your place I should feel like you. But satyagraha is not a simple affair. It is a way of life. It requires discipline. It demands infinite patience and capacity for uttermost suffering. Civil disobedience, which is but a phase of satyagraha, has to be suspended even though colleagues may have to suffer imprisonment, hardships attendant upon jail life, and even worse. And they have to do all this with good grace, joyfully and without malice towards those who are responsible for subjecting them to such suffering. Remember, too, that a true satyagrahi, being outside, goes through greater mental suffering than the one who has gone behind prison bars. The latter has done his task for the time being. His mind is free. He fulfills his immediate mission if he behaves like a model prisoner and cheerfully submits to the sufferings he might have to go through. Whereas the former has to bear the brunt of managing the struggle, thinking out plans and responding to the programme as it may be given from day to day.

I have to ask you to prolong your suspension if only for the simple and decisive reason that two bodies are offering civil disobedience for purposes wholly different from yours, however worthy their purpose may be. The Arya Samaj civil disobedience is purely religious in the sense that it is being offered for the vindication of the exercise of their religion. The Hindu Mahasabha is, I suppose, supporting the Arya Samaj. And, therefore, the struggle has assumed a communal colour. If you resume civil disobedience, it will be very difficult for you to retain your nationalistic character. You will expose yourselves to needless suspicion. Your methods too may not be identical with theirs. You will create an embarrassing situation without advancing your cause.

Thus the situation demands delicate handling. It is my conviction that your restraint will largely disarm suspicion, and to that extent you will be making a definite advance towards your goal. Meanwhile I can give you the assurance that whatever friendly offices can do is being and will continue to be done. Having heard my argument, you will act as may seem best to you. You must reject my advice if it does not appeal to you head and heart. If you accept it, remember that every member will be expected to devote himself whole-heartedly to the constructive programme as I have explained it to you.

6. Report on the Internal situation of the
Hyderabad State for the first half of February 1939

Fortnightly Report for the first half of February 1939, Hyderabad Residency Records, File No. 49(2)-P(5), 1939, NAI

16 February 1939

The Id passed off quietly everywhere, though Muslim feeling against the civil disobedience movement is very bitter. Pandit Narayanswamy, the Arya Samaj 'Dictator', arrived secretly in Hyderabad on 31st January, the day of the Id, and it is believed that, that day was chosen with the deliberate intention of provoking a disturbance.

Civil disobedience by the Arya Samaj and Hindu Mahasabha continues, and it is now practically impossible to distinguish between the two movements, whose aims and methods are identical. In spite of widespread appeal in British India for really large Jathas, the parties sent continue to be small and unimpressive.

But while outside volunteers are poor in quality, and quantity, subscription have been large and a considerable sum has been collected, in particular by the Arya Samaj, in British India.

... British India continues to play the largest role in the agitation, and signs are not wanting that the apathy of the Hindus in the State itself is arousing resentment outside. For example, the Poona 'Trikal' on 2nd February published an article bitterly reproaching Hyderabad Hindus for their lethargy, adding that for years they had been crying for outside assistance and now, when they get it, they look on with folded arms.

Spasmodic signs of no-rent propaganda have appeared in certain villages in one particular Jagir though there have been no overt signs elsewhere. But my information is that the State Congress, whose activities are temporarily in suspense, is secretly working for a revival of satyagraha which should include a no-rent movement, particularly in Telangana, to be directed from Bezvada in Madras. Meanwhile the State Congress keeps in touch with Wardha, and two of the local leaders are reported to have left for that place on the 11th February presumably to seek advice and instruction from Congress Headquarters.

Supplementary

Secret information indicates that Maulana Abul Kalam Azad has been in touch with the Nizam direct, and has conveyed to him the information that Gandhi is now convinced that local conditions in Hyderabad are unsuitable for satyagraha, which would, if persisted in, lead to civil war and upset Congress administration in the provinces. Gandhi will therefore not advise resumption but would like a gesture by the Nizam to alleviate unemployment and rural poverty, such as establishment of mills and Cottage industries. The Nizam is alleged to have approved the idea but failed to see where funds were to be found. Abul Kalam Azad is said to have hinted that it should

come from the Nizam's privy purse, a suggestion which, as might expected, has caused some alarm lest it should be followed up.

7. Anjuman-e Ittehad al-Muslamin Demands

Bombay Chronicle, 28 March 1939

Hyderabad
27 March 1939

The Anjuman-ul Musalmin on behalf of the Muslims of the State has issued a memorandum rejecting any kind of reforms which would be detrimental to Muslim power and culture in the State and says that if at all there is to be an expansion of the legislature, etc. Muslims should be given due weightage in consonance with their tradition so that their number should be in a majority with separate electorate.

Among the other demands the Muslim desire that Urdu, as it is a State language, should be the official language as medium of instruction in higher and University courses, as the services to Muslims, besides being of political importance are also a question of their economic condition and therefore they would not yield to distribution of services on population basis on any circumstances. In view of the ruler's religion being Islam the Ecclesiastical Department should be maintained intact to look after the interests of Muslims and their religion.

The State Congress authorities whose goal is that of Responsible Government is understood to be considering the latest developments created by certain sections of Muslims.

8. Agitation in Hyderabad: Akbar Hydari to

Raja Narendranath,¹ 23 April 1939

File No. 723, 1939, AP State Archives

23 April 1939

Please refer to your letter of the 24 February 1939.

I appreciate the object of your letter as well as your conviction that, though the issues involved in the agitation which is now being carried on in Hyderabad by the Arya Samaj are important, they are not complicated. I feel that they will themselves lend to a peaceful solution through the machinery we intend setting up (and of which I conveyed a hint to Mr Aney in my reply to his letter) for dealing in a constitutional manner with the alleged religious grievances of any community, no matter whether Hindu or Muslim. Recourse to such a machinery in the normal course will lead to a fair shifting and examination of whatever grievance may exist and I see no reason why appropriate remedial action should not be possible should the results of such shifting and examination prove the necessity of such action. The creation of this machinery is expected to be announced if not earlier at least side by side with and as part and parcel of the announcement in connection with constitutional and other reforms and this, as has been made clear in a recent communique, may be expected by the end of the month. I appreciate the motive underlying your suggestion that certain responsible persons should, after a visit to the State and after due study of things for themselves including discussions with the authorities, attempt to suggest a solution. Constitutionally, however, this method is objectionable. The intervention of an outside body in matters which primarily concern the State and its relations with its subjects carries with it obvious objections, particularly as, even apart from such objections, the atmosphere today is tense on

account of the influx of Jathas and the recent outrages which are only resulting in increasing the communal bitterness and may at any time result in reprisals and bloodshed. This tension has increased with the knowledge that the proportion of outsiders to persons belonging to the State in the agitation which is at present being carried on is 5:1 and the visit of persons from outside, however well intentioned, for enquiring into matters which concern the State may lead to repercussions for which you yourself would not like to be responsible. I am sure, however, that the constitutional method devised by us will itself create an avenue for approaching the problem in the correct manner and I am equally certain that you will yourself appreciate its creation.

¹ Raja Narendra Nath (1864–1945): graduated from Calcutta; M.A. in 1886 with Philosophy, Science and Persian as his subjects; appointed Assistant Commissioner at Gurdaspur; 1911 officiated as Commissioner, Lahore Division; resigned in 1916; member, Punjab Legislative Council, 1921–37; President, All India Hindu Mahasabha Conference, 1927; elected from Punjab to attend Round Table Conference in 1929; worked as a Champion of the Hindu Cause.

9. Agitation in Hyderabad: Raja Narendranath to
Akbar Hydari, 29 April 1939

File No. 723, 1939, AP State Archives

*Fairfields
Ferozpur Road
Lahore
29 April 1939*

My dear Sir Akbar Hydari,

I acknowledge with thanks the receipt of your letter dated 23rd April in answer to my letter dated 24 February 1939. The delay in reply was so long that I and my friends in consultation with whom I wrote my letter were driven to despair, we were thinking of taking another constitutional step, the only step which it is possible to take under the circumstances in consultation and cooperation with the leading Hindus of all the provinces, for the redress of the grievances of the Arya Samajists.

...The Question of introducing constitutional reforms and of associating the people with the administration of the State is quite a separate one from a declaration of policy about religious freedom and religious toleration. Your suggestion about the appointment of committee for revising rules and regulations about religious association and the control which will be exercised over them, does not commend itself to me or to my conferers. Such committees often lead nowhere. We have a recent instance of the infructuous nature of sub-committees in the case of Rajkot. I should like to approach the issues involved direct and ask for the orders of the Executive Council of HH the Nizam of them.

I enclose for your information : resolutions No. (4), (5) and (13) passed at Sholapur Conference, held under the Presidentship of Mr M.S. Aney, in the last week of December 1938. From resolutions No. (4) and (5) I pick the following demands which I think represent the irreducible minimum of civic rights claimed:

- (i) Absolute freedom for the practice and preaching of the Vedic religion and culture. If a preacher makes seditious speech or gives offence to the followers of other faith, he may be prosecuted under the law; but there is no reason to stop the preaching of Vedic religion, simply because some preachers are apt to break the law.

- (ii) Full freedom for starting new Arya Samaj and building of new Arya Samaj mandirs, Yaganashalas, Havankundas (at a distance of say, 50 yards from religious buildings of others) and the repairing of the old one without obtaining any permission from the Ecclesiastical Department of the State.
- (iii) Liberty to start schools for the primary and secondary education of Hindu boys and girls. If their recognition is not recommended by the Education Department, they may not be recognised but there is no reason to demand their closure.

There is a considerable lack of confidence about the working of the Ecclesiastical Department of the State, so far as the Arya Samaj is concerned. The Arya Samaj is a reforming body and aims at the reclamation of depressed classes. One of the principal functions of the Ecclesiastical Department is Tabligh (Conversion to Islam). Thus the two bodies are apt to come into conflict and hence the suggestion that the creation of new Arya Samaj Mandirs should not depend on the permission of the Ecclesiastical Department. But definite and clear instructions may be given as to what is understood by 'proximity to other religious buildings'. I suggest a distance of 50 yards. No change is suggested in the jurisdiction of the Department over Waqf or Endowments to religious buildings or in their power to settle disputes connected therewith.

It is a well known fact that Urdu is the medium of instruction in a majority of the State schools whilst Telugu and Canarese are the languages spoken by the people. It is, therefore, necessary for the State to give every facility for the starting and recognition of private schools. As the Education Department has, perhaps, its predilections and prejudices, I have suggested that schools which are not recommended by the Education Department for recognition may be allowed to continue and their continuance should not make organizers liable to a penalty. I understand from Mr Aney's address at the Sholapur Conference that Hindus, though educationally the most advanced in the whole of India, are backward in Hyderabad State and I can account for this State of things in no other way than this: in some areas the students cannot show any marked progress with Urdu as the medium of instruction.

So long as the demands are based on reasonable principles of justice, which should be the basis of civic rights in all civilized States, it seems to me to be immaterial as to who makes the suggestion; whether people from outside the State or within the State. An enlightened Prince like HEH the Nizam, advised by a Council presided over by a far-sighted statesman like yourself, should have no hesitation in accepting the principles embodied in the above demands.

Resolution No. 4

The Arya Samajists, of the whole of India and abroad, being deeply interested in the religious, social and cultural liberty of their co-religionists in the dominions of His Exalted Highness, the Nizam, wherein the Hindus in general and the Arya Samajists in particular, are undergoing disabilities and untold sufferings inflicted openly or otherwise, in this Congress assembly declare in clear terms the following to be the demands of the elementary rights of their co-religionists in Hyderabad State.

- (1) There should be full freedom for due performance of religious rites and ceremonies.
- (2) There should be full freedom for religious preaching, reciting of Kathas, delivering of sermons and lectures, taking out of Nagar Kirtans and processions, building of Arya Samaj Mandirs, Yagnashalaas and Havankundas, hoisting of OM Flags, opening of new Arya Samajs and publishing of literature bearing on Vedic religion and culture.
- (3) The State should neither take part nor encourage and the State servants should be forbidden from taking part in Tabligh (proselytizing) movement. No conversion to Islam

of Hindu prisoners inside the jails and of Hindu children in schools should be allowed. Hindu orphans should not be handed over to the Muslims.

- (4) The Ecclesiastical Department should be abolished or at least it should have no control over the temples of and affairs concerning the Hindus and Aryas.
- (5) There should be no distinction made between Muslim newspapers and publications and those of the Hindus and Aryas.
- (6) There should be no ban imposed on the entry of Arya missionaries and the existing bans should be removed.
- (7) The unjust and distinctive treatment meted out generally by the State police and other officials to Aryas and Hindus in comparison to Muslims should cease.
- (8) The education of Hindu and Arya boys and girls, in primary and secondary standards at least, should be in their mother tongue and not necessarily in Urdu.
- (9) There should be no restriction imposed on the starting by the Hindus and Aryas of private gymnasiums (Akhadas) and private Educational Institutions, such as schools and colleges for boys and girls, libraries, reading rooms etc.

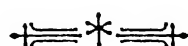
Resolution No. 5

- (a) Whereas repeated representations made by the international Aryan League and the Arya Pratinidhi Sabha, Nizam State, during the last six years, with a view to seek redress of the various grievances underlying the demands made in Resolution No. (4), have failed to achieve the object and whereas the Arya Samajists and the Hindus of the Nizam's Dominions and the whole of India feel strongly in the matter, this Congress is of opinion that the only remedy left now to secure the redress of their grievance is to report to a campaign of suffering and self-sacrifice in the form of non-violent satyagraha.
- (b) This Congress, therefore, authorizes Mahatma Narayan Swamiji Maharaj to form a satyagraha committee with himself as its first Dictator, to organise and conduct a campaign of satyagraha and calls upon all Aryas and Hindus throughout India to give their wholehearted support to the movement.
- (c) This Congress for the speedy attainment of the aforesaid demands directs the Committee to concentrate, for the present, its fight on items mentioned below:
 - (i) Absolute freedom for the practice and preaching of the Vedic religion and culture, with due regard to the feelings of the followers of other faiths.
 - (ii) Full freedom for starting new Arya Samajs and building of new Arya Samaj mandirs, Yagnashalas, Havankundas and the repairing of the old ones without obtaining any permission from the Ecclesiastical or any other department of the State.

Provided that the authority to call off the satyagraha shall vest ultimately in the Sarvadeshik Arya Pratinidhi Sabha.

Resolution No. 13

In the opinion of this Congress, time has arrived when an appeal be made to the Paramount Power in the name of all the Aryas throughout India and abroad for the protection of the Aryas and their most elementary religious and social rights in the Dominions of HEH the Nizam, as all sorts of representations hitherto made to the Government of HEH have failed in securing such protection, this Congress hereby authorizes the Sarvadeshik Sabha in the matter.



10. Demands by the Hindu Mahasabha:
To Safeguard Hindu Interest in the Nizam State

M.S. Aney Papers, Subject file No. 11, 1939-40, part 2, NMML

Hindu Mahasabha
Head Office (Bombay Branch)
9 May 1939

The following are the fundamental demands put forward by the Hindu Mahasabha in order to safeguard the legitimate interests of the Hindus in the Nizam dominions, as framed and formulated in the light of the Resolution No. 2 passed in its 20th session held at Nagpur.

(1) Liberty of Worship:

There should be full freedom of Religious Worship, rites and ceremonies to Hindus of all denominations—Sanatanists, Arya Samajists, Jains, Lingaits, Sikhs and others. They should be allowed to preach, recite kathas, take out religious processions, hoist their respective flags, build new temples, mandirs, gurdwaras etc. or repair old ones, start new centers of religious organisations and institutions, publish activities without any harassing restraint put on them as is the case now, provided they carry on activities with due and legitimate respect for other faiths. The religious liberty of Hindus must not be subjected to any special disability from which the Muslims are exempted.

The Ecclesiastical Department as constituted at present should altogether be abolished or a separate Board be constituted for Hindus with Hindu members on it who enjoy the confidence of Hindu community and the authority to regulate religious activities of the Hindus and supervise their religious institutions should be vested in that Hindu Board alone.

The State or the State servants should be strictly prevented from associating themselves directly or indirectly with the Tablik movement which aims to convert Hindus to Islam. No conversions of Hindu prisoners in jails or Hindu students in schools and colleges be allowed and no Tablik propaganda should be carried in these and such other State institutions. Nor should Hindu orphans be handed over to Muslims by the State institutions. Any Muslim State servant found guilty of contravening these orders should be severely dealt with.

(2) Cultural Liberties:

All primary and secondary education at least must be imparted to Hindu students in their respective mother-tongue. The Marathi, Kanarese and Telugu languages should be recognised on equal footing with the Urdu in all legal and administrative departments of the State in their respective territories. The Policy of thrusting the Urdu language alone on the Hindus and thus starving out their mother tongues must be definitely abandoned. The deliberate attempt on the part of the State to transform ancient Hindu names of towns into new Urdu ones such as Dharashiva into Usmanabad, Indoor into Nizamabad, must also cease.

There should be no restrictions imposed on Hindus alone in theory or practice on starting private educational institutions, libraries, Gymkhanas or Akhadas etc.

No prohibition should be placed on the free observance of Hindu Festivals alone when they coincide with Muslim Festivals.

(3) Civic Liberties:

Liberty of Press, of platform and of association must be granted to all alike.

Any offending person may be tried in a Court of Law. But condign punishment must be inflicted on Muslim fanatics for taking out armed processions or otherwise taking law into their own hands with a view to terrorise the Hindu.

(4) Constitutional Reforms:

A substantial measure of responsible self-Government at the center should be forthwith introduced and the Hindus should be entitled to have representation on the legislatures, in the public services and especially in the police and the army in proportion to their population.

Any laws, rules and regulations that may be framed in the interest of public peace and order must not be discriminative or operating against the Hindus alone in order to humiliate them. Any state official or servant found guilty of contravening this principle in administering them should be severely dealt with.

11. Hyderabad's Constitution: T.B. Sapru to Akbar Hydari, 9 June 1939

File No. 740, Constitutional Affairs Department, Andhra Pradesh State Archives

19 Albert Road
Allahabad
9 June 1939

M. Dear Sir Akbar,

I can acknowledge your letter of the 24th May, which arrived today (I am surprised at the delay) only very briefly.

On 13 May last I suddenly developed a carbuncle on my back which Major Griffiths, the Civil Surgeon, thought required an operation. Accordingly Capt. Nigam, the Chief Surgeon and Professor of Surgery of Lucknow Medical College, was sent for and he performed the operation on 17th May. Other complications also intervened but it is mainly due to the skill of this remarkable surgeon that my life has been saved. For nearly 12 days I was hovering between life and death. I am assured now that the crisis is over. The dressing will go on for another 10 to 12 days after which accompanied by doctor and my daughters I shall go up to Kashmir where His Highness, who has been most sympathetic to me during my illness, has been pleased to place a house at my disposal. I propose to come back by the end of August or the middle of September.

I am not allowed to do any work—indeed my physical and mental condition is such that I can not do any work. Nevertheless my curiosity was so much roused that I have in bed gone through the *Arzdasht* and the *Farman* of His Exalted Highness. Constitutional Government need not necessarily mean full flagged democratic government. I note therefore, with great pleasure that you have laid down the foundation of a constitution on which the moral and material prosperity of Hyderabad can be built up in future. I also note that you have adopted what is called the system of 'functional representation' i.e. the representation of various interests in the legislature. Perhaps in all the circumstances of the country and having regard to our experience of the forces that have been let loose in British India during the last three years under the new constitution, you are wise in adopting this system. It may interest you to know that the same basis is going to be adopted in Benares, which of course is a small state and which I am advising on the question of constitutional reforms. Incidentally it enables you to get round the difficult question of joint or separate representation. I have been much interested also to read the lists of various subjects reserved on which legislation can be introduced by the government or by private members.

Without committing myself to any details, the constitution you have framed strikes me as essentially sound and capable of further expansion in the light of experience even though it is bound to be criticised on democratic or communal grounds. I have been much depressed to read in the newspapers before my illness and to hear from friends now of the invasion of Hyderabad by Jathas from British India. Temperamentally I am opposed to all direct action but on political grounds I consider it most unfortunate that this line of action should have been adopted by some people.

Yes you are quite right in saying that the Congress governments have been quite successful in wrecking some of the safeguards under section 52 of the Government of India Act. I very well remember the discussion that took place at the Joint Parliamentary Committee on the question of the protection of rights and interests of Indian States and what is happening now is precisely what some of us thought might happen and which should not be allowed to happen. The real fact is that Governors dare not interfere because no alternative governments are possible in Congress Provinces.

I shall write to you again when I am better and have studied the papers, which you have so kindly sent me...

12. Hindu Mahasabha and Hyderabad Satyagraha

M.S. Aney Papers, Subject File No. 11, 1939-40, part 2, NMML

*Hindu Mahasabha Head Office
(Bombay Branch)
Keluskar Road
Dadar, Bombay.
18 June 1939*

Press Note

In view of the fact that many newspapers go on publishing erroneous and mutually contradicting figures at a guess regarding the Nizam Civil Resistance Movement carried on the Hindu Mahasabha front, this Press Note is issued to supply the public with authoritative information as to the number of Civil Resisters and the funds raised and spent up-to-date in pressing on the movement by the Hindu Mahasabha.

- (1) The total number of Civil Resisters from different centers and Shibirs sent to the front to fight out this Dharma Yuddha by the Hindu Mahasabha is approximately 3200 (three thousand and two hundred).
- (2) The Approximate expenses incurred up-to-date by the Hindu Mahasabha on account of this movement amounts to Rs 58,000 (Rupees Fifty-eight thousand).
Please Note: The average expenses of Railway passage and stay at the Shibirs comes to Rs 15 at least per head. Thus the sum spent on account of these Civil Resisters sending to the front amount approximately to Rs 48,000 (Rupees Forty-eight thousand) and propaganda expenses incurred are about Rs 10,000 (Rupees Ten thousand); thus total comes up to Rs 58,000 (Rupees fifty-eight thousand).
- (3) Provincially, Maharashtra (including Nagpur, Berar and the Marathwada in the Nizam state) has supplied about 5000 (Five thousand) Civil Resisters (namely three thousand to the Hindu Mahasabha front and two thousand to Arya Samaj and State Congress fronts);

and contributed not less than Rs 50,000 (Rupees fifty thousand) to the Hindu Mahasabha front alone.

J.D. Malekar
(Sec. Hindu Mahasabha Office, Bombay Br.)

Please Note: That the above Press Note was issued on the 18 June 1939. Since then up to the 1 July 1939 the number of Civil Resisters gone to the front under the Hindu Mahasabha flag has risen to 3700 and the total expenses amount approximately to Rs 70,000 on account of the Hindu Mahasabha alone.

13. Anti-Hyderabad Agitation: Conron Smith
to E.M. Jenkins, 24 June 1939
File No. 85(c), Delhi State Archives

Simla
24 June 1939

My dear Jenkins,

I am desired to write to you on the subject of 'the anti-Hyderabad' agitation and on the question of what action can be taken in Chief Commissioners' Provinces to prevent their use for the purpose of organising expeditions directed against the Hyderabad Government.

2. The Chief centers in British India from which the Satyagrahis are drawn have been the Punjab, where the influence of the Arya Samaj is particularly strong; the Central Provinces and Berar, where the Hindu Mahasabha is very active; Bombay, the United Provinces, to a less degree Madras, and Ajmer. The Punjab has been a fruitful source of both recruits and funds for the movement. Delhi, as the Government of India understands the position, has been and is still, an important collecting center for Jathas, but does not to the same extent as other areas constitute a recruiting ground. The technique appears to be to bring Jathas to Delhi where they are given a public welcome and made a focus of enthusiasm before they are dispatched to offer sacrifice in the cause of the Hyderabad Hindus.

3. It seems desirable that in dealing with this campaign the Chief Commissioners' Provinces should not commit to render what assistance they can reasonably be expected to give; and the most hopeful line of approach, if that principle is followed would perhaps be to work on the lines of the resolution adopted by the conference of Home Ministers recently held in Simla, namely, that active measures should be taken to suppress incitement to communal hatred and violence in British India. In as much as these anti-Hyderabad meetings are definitely communal in their character and intention, the resolution clearly covers action designed to prevent the organisation and holding of such meetings.

4. It would perhaps be helpful if I indicated at this point the steps which we understand have already been taken in certain Governors' Provinces, or are about to be taken, for this purpose. In Madras an order has been issued under Section 144 Criminal Procedure Code forbidding the holding in the city of Madras of anti-Hyderabad meetings, and certain leaflets of that character have been proscribed. In Sholapur after the recent rioting the Government of Bombay also imposed a ban on meetings. So far as the Punjab is concerned, we have just received information that the Indian State (Protection) Act is to be brought into full force throughout that Province. Unfortunately, the Government of Central Provinces and Berar which constitute one of the most important bases for the anti-Hyderabad movement have so far declined to cooperate directly in any efforts to

suppress the agitation which, although directed against the State of Hyderabad, is inevitably reacting adversely on the communal situation in British India. (Your last report indicates that such is the case in Delhi). We believe, however, that the Central Provinces and Berar Government are contemplating some form of action intended to deal with communal agitation in general.

5. There have been indication recently that lack of funds and a tendency on the part of the arrested Satyagrahis to apologise and obtain release have somewhat damped enthusiasm and it is reported that a suggestion has been made to await the announcement of the Hyderabad reforms which was to be issued on the 19th of this month. We have since heard, however, that the announcement in question is being postponed.

6. In the light of what I have said above, the Government of India is anxious to have as early as possible your views as to what steps should be taken in Delhi to discourage its present use as a collecting area and a centre for holding meetings to stimulate this particular brand of agitation. It appears to us that there might be considerable advantage in making an effort to stem the tide of Jathas somewhere rather higher up than at the outlet in certain Governor's Provinces; and if any statement of the position as regards Delhi is correct that observation would apply in particular to Delhi Province.

7. The Government of India fully recognise the embarrassment which the necessity of taking further measures likely to be stigmatized as anti-Hindu, and following on the steps which you have recently been compelled to take for the purpose of dealing with the 'Shiva Mandir' agitation, must almost inevitably occasioned you, but they feel sure you will agree that the situation calls for urgent action. The object of this letter is, as I have said, to ascertain your views on the question what form that action could most suitably take. Apart from the Criminal Procedure Code and the Indian Penal Code, I suppose that action is in theory possible under the Indian States (Protection) Act, the Indian Criminal Law Amendment Act, 1932 (as regards unlawful association in particular), and the Punjab Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 1935. I should be much obliged if you would consider, and let us know as soon as possible, what form of action would in all the circumstances be the most effective and convenient.

Sincerely Yours

14. Hindu Mahasabha and Hyderabad Satyagraha:

V.D. Savarkar to M.S. Aney, 2 July 1939

M.S. Aney Papers, Subject File No. 11, 1939-40, part 2, NMML

*Savarkar Sadan
Keluskar Road
Dadar
Bombay 14
2 July 1939*

Mahashaya,

I was very much pleased to know from Sjt Desh Bandhuji and also to read in papers that you have accepted to go to England to carry on the Nizam Civil Resistance agitation there with a view to bring pressure on the British public opinion on the Nizam and seek intervention on the part of the Paramount Power.

Our Hindu Sabhaists—mostly Marathas, who have already set up agitation there and passed questions in Parliament will of course find a trusted and able leader in you and work under your guidance. Mr Tamhankar, the correspondent of *Kesari* and *Maratha*, has already formed an active

Nizam Civil Resistance Committee in England. His address is: Mr D.V. Tahmankar, B.A., Indian News Service, Eldon Chambers, 30 Fleet Street, London EC 4.

It goes without saying that you will kindly undertake to represent the Hindu Mahasabha. You will see how justifiable and comprehensive they are even from the so-called Nationalist point of view and even from the point of Human Civil liberties.

Hoping that you are starting at your earliest convenience on this mission.

I am,

Yours sincerely,

15. Anti-Hyderabad Agitation in Delhi:

E.M. Jenkins to Conran-Smith, 5 July 1939

File No. 85(c), 1939, Delhi Archives

Delhi
5 July 1939

My dear Conran-Smith,

Kindly refer to your demi-official letter No. 4597-D/39-political, dated the 24 June 1939, regarding the anti-Hyderabad agitation and the possibility of taking action to concentrate it in the Chief Commissioners' Provinces. I have now discussed the matter with Lewis and Kilburn and am in a position to give you a detailed reply.

2. In the first place it is necessary to be clear as to the situation in Delhi itself. Since the beginning of August 1938 (when the Shiv mandir agitation was launched) Delhi has been passing through a period of marked communal tension. The real causes of this tension probably lie very deep—Hindus and Muslims are, deliberately or by instinct, manœuvring for the position in the constitutional field, and their activities have been stimulated by the feeling that events in Europe may lead to something in the nature of revolutionary change for which they must be prepared. The symptoms of the tension have been numerous, and the anti-Hyderabad agitation is (in my view) only one of them. The line taken hitherto—and it must be remembered that Delhi has been in a distinctly unsettled state for nearly a year—has been to intervene only to prevent or suppress actual disorder. At the moment the tension may fairly be described as chronic rather than acute, and in the ordinary way I should expect it to relax gradually over a period of another year or so. Manifestations of this kind tend in my experience to raise quickly to a peak; a second stage follows in which interest, though awakened from time to time, gradually flags; and there is a third stage of reaction ending in a lucid interval. Taking Delhi in isolation, I see no great cause for alarm. There might be a more or less serious communal riot at any time, but it would not necessarily be started as the result of one of the specific agitations. A well-directed stone, a quarrel between two small boys, or an abduction case would as easily fire the train. Left to myself, therefore, I should pursue my present policy which is probably as good as any other.

3. I turn now to the anti-Hyderabad agitation itself. This agitation is managed in Delhi by various Arya Samaj organisations. Few Delhi men have actually joined the jathas proceeding to Hyderabad, but Delhi is the 'jumping off point' for such jathas, and a fertile source of funds.

The agitation may be examined (a) in its local aspect and (b) as effecting the Hyderabad state. To deal with the local aspect first, I admit that the agitation does tend to embitter communal relations and has led to 'incidents'. The last two 'incidents' in the City were, however, occasioned by the kidnapping scare, and the procession held on the 'Maharani of Jhansi Day' and had nothing whatever to do with the anti-Hyderabad agitation. An attempt to suppress the agitation would

therefore probably not decrease the local danger of a riot; it might in fact increase the danger for a time at least. I am not of course referring to routine measures against individual demonstrations and speakers, or to action under the Indian Press (Emergency Power) Act, 1931, but to special measures designed to suppress the agitation as such.

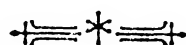
The effect of the agitation upon the Hyderabad State is a different matter, and it is obvious that the daily influx of jathas from British India must be most embarrassing to the State authorities.

I conclude therefore (a) that special measures would not on local grounds be justified, but (b) that special measures would be justified to relieve the situation in the Hyderabad State.

4. It remains to consider the provisions of the law which might suitably be used. It seems to me that the British Indian Law generally could hardly be employed for the purpose in view. For example, the District Magistrate of Delhi could (and would) make use of section 144 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1898, to prevent a demonstration likely to cause a riot in Delhi City; he would find some difficulty in doing so on the allegation that certain persons might cause a riot in Hyderabad. Similarly, it would be difficult on the facts to make use of section 16 of the Indian Criminal Law (Amendment), Act, 1908, even if it were practical politics to proscribe a large religious organisation. These illustrations are perhaps sufficient to make my point clear, and it is doubtless because these difficulties were realised when the Indian States (Protection) Act, 1934, was passed. Sections 4 to 7 of this Act enable the authorities in British India to deal with precisely the situation that has arisen in relation to the Hyderabad State, and I am satisfied that the only proper way of dealing with the agitation in the mass would be to bring these sections into force.

5. I have said above that special measures would be justified to relieve the situation in the Hyderabad State, and have concluded that the Law directly applicable is contained in the Indian States (Protection) Act, 1934. Before the Government of India decides that special measures must be taken, I recommend that they consider very carefully the situation that may result in Delhi. Delhi is the bottle-neck through which all 'volunteers' from the Punjab pass; it could well be made the collecting station for the Western United Provinces and (if conditions were considered favourable by the organizers) for other fields of recruitment also. It follows that unless the Indian State (Protection) Act, 1934, is not only brought into force, but used, both in the Punjab and in the United Provinces, vigorous action under that Act in Delhi may result in the virtual end of the agitation in Delhi. It would be necessary for my Police and Magistrates to tackle here the entire stream of volunteers, and we should unquestionably need additional police and additional jail accommodation. I very much doubt if the government of the Punjab mean business; in fact I understood in Simla that they intended to use the Act with reference to local situations, a purpose which seems to me foreign to the Act itself. The Government of the United Provinces would certainly not cooperate. Ghaziabad is at present the jumping off place for the Shiv jathas en-route to Delhi, and I have not thought it worth while to suggest that action should be taken in the United Provinces against this concentration. In short I think it most undesirable that the Government of India should concentrate upon their winter headquarters the whole of the anti-Hyderabad agitation and unless they are satisfied that jathas will be tackled as a matter of routine from the various sources of recruitment up to the borders of Hyderabad I think that they should refrain from insisting upon the enforcement here of the dormant sections of the Indian States (Protection) Act, 1934.

Yours Sincerely



16. Hindu Mahasabha and Hyderabad Satyagraha:
Dulal Mitra to M.S. Aney¹, (?) July 1939

M.S. Aney Papers, Subject File No. 11, 1939-40, Part 2, NMML

Dear Mr M.S. Aney,

You know perhaps by this time that your papers, sent to our office, for Revered Pandit M.M. Malaviya² have been duly sent to him at his Calcutta address. Whatever you may do in the matter of presenting the Hyderabad case to the British Government in India and in England, I wish to associate myself with the same under your leadership. Although I am connected with the important activities of the Bengal branch of the Hindu Mahasabha, I prefer to appear before the public, whenever and where ever possible, as a secretary of our party, and under your guidance, and that is why I am writing to you on the subject, without feeling any delicacy. May I get a copy of your presidential address on Hyderabad affairs?...

¹ Madhav Shrihari Aney (1880-1968); was educated at Chanda and Nagpur; came under influence of Tilak: passed BL in 1907; Vice President, Home Rule League; Secretary, Nationalist Party under leadership of Lala Lajpat Rai; Strongly supported boycott of Simon Commission; President, Vidarbha Congress Committee and member of AICC, 1920-30; member, Central Legislative Assembly, 1937; opposed anti-Bose resolution at Tripuri, 1939; did not resign in 1939 from Legislative Assembly; High Commissioner in Ceylon, 1944-47; joined Constituent Assembly in 1947; Governor of Bihar in 1948.

² Madan Mohan Malviya (1861-1946); educ: matric in 1879; joined Muir Central College, but lost a year and graduated from Calcutta University in 1884; started career as school teacher; became editor of Hindustan, 1887-89; passed LL.B in 1892; President of the Congress, 1909, 1918, 1932 and 1933; founded Hindu Mahasabha in 1906; started *Leader*, English daily in 1909; Chairman, Board of Directors of Hindustan Times, 1924-46; member, Indian Legislative Assembly, 1924-30, his greatest achievement was Benaras Hindu University; Vice Chancellor, Benaras Hindu University 1919-38; occupied a high position in Indian public life.

17. Jawaharlal Nehru on Feudalism in Hyderabad

Interview to the press, *SWJN*, Vol. 9, pp. 447-48

Secunderabad
15 July 1939

Though the grievances of the subjects in all the different States are not the same, the fundamental system of administration is similar, and naturally the States, People Conference has to go deep into the feudal and semi-feudal system of administration which is generally found prevalent in almost all the States.

Unfortunately, this important aspect which is common to one and all the States has not been receiving sufficient attention at the hands of the States' People Conference. The organisation has very recently established a research bureau to collect sufficient information and data relating to various Indian States to evolve common policy which can be a sort of guide to the people of all the States.

As regards the attitude which the State Congress should adopt if the Nizam's government is not going to include grant of Responsible Government in its future reforms scheme, I can not say anything about this unless I have full particulars with me. Much will depend upon the strength of the local Congress organisation, and there are several indeterminable factors which have to be taken into consideration before any action is taken. The Hyderabad State Congress should not surrender its ideals, but I would not mind if the name of the organisation is changed.

18. V.D. Savarkar on Reforms

Statement, All India Hindu Mahasabha Papers, File No. C-21, NMML

Bombay
20 July 1939

I welcome the announcement of Reforms¹ by the Nizam Government as a wise move betokening on their part of the change of heart for better.

In spite of the ugly fact that the Reforms are tainted from the beginning to the end by an underlying assumption that the Muslims though in a 10% minority in the State are to be Politically recognised on an equal basis with the Hindus who form a 90% majority, not on account of any special merit but only because they are Muslims, which assumption belies the Nizam's professions of treating all his subjects with equal justice irrespective of Race or Religion and in spite of the fact that the seemingly disinterested claim in theory advanced by the Government that they have framed electorates on economical and functional basis in order to eliminate all communal bias, stands exposed in fact by the astounding self contradiction which insists in the very next breath on reserving 50% seats in the legislature for Muslims as Muslims. I still feel no hesitation in stating that even these Reforms, halting as they are, do constitute a substantial channel which if the Nizam Government would only help the Hindus in all sincerity to work out may lead to future expansion and full freedom.

Thanks to the brave sufferings and sacrifices undergone by those thousands of our Civil Resisters, the Hindus have succeeded at last in effecting a constitutional breach in the citadel of fanatical autocracy wide enough for a triumphal march of forces of progress into its very heart. And therefore I reciprocate the hope expressed by HEH the Nizam in 'a spirit of accommodation and response' for which he pleads and assure him that the Hindus will never be found wanting in responsive cooperation with the Government to bring about restoration of peace and amity provided that the peace and amity are not to be bought at the cost of their birth rights as Hindus or subjection to any racial humiliations in future.

In as much as this announcement of Reforms on the part of the Nizam Government makes it incumbent and advisable to review and reconsider the attitude of the Hindu Mahasabha in future towards this question, I have already called an emergency meeting of the Working Committee of the Hindu Mahasabha at Poona—such a chivalrous act on the part of the Nizam cannot fail to restore a peaceful and friendly atmosphere and to persuade the Committee to suspend the Civil Resistance Movement and extend a hearty cooperation with the Government of the Nizam in working out a progressive peaceful and glorious future for the State.

¹ A new constitution for Hyderabad was announced by the Reforms Committee, appointed by the Nizam in September 1937, on 19 June 1939. See *LAR*, Vol 2, 1939, p.7.

19. Muslims Demonstrate Against Hyderabad Reforms

Bombay Chronicle, 21 July 1939

Secunderabad
20 July 1939

The new constitutional reforms announced by the Hyderabad Government and the firman issued by HEH the Nizam granting fundamental rights are generally welcomed by the sober-minded people, while a section of the Muslims held demonstrations and hartal resulting in several arrests.

Muslims volunteers came in clash with the police when they tried to get a Muslim Bank closed, as a mark of protest against the announcement of the reforms. The city Police Commissioner and Nawab Bahadur Yar Jung had to rush to the scene and calm the Assembly of about 600 people. Nawab Bahadur Yar Jung appealed to those assembled not to get excited but to disperse and observed that he realised the feelings of the Muslims and their sentiments, and if the time came, he would be the first person to court imprisonment, if the Reforms proved detrimental to Muslims and the Islamic State.

The police, however, had to take into custody four persons.

Posters were seen pasted on the walls decrying the reforms. Cement roads leading to the Executive Council office were painted with 'Reforms Murdabad'. With regard to propaganda carried on in a certain section of the press, that according to the announcement the legislature would consist of an elected majority, opinion is current that it is misleading. According to the new constitution, non-officials would be in a majority, and whenever the tie came in, elected members might find it difficult to win over the opposition.

20. On the Arya Samaj Settlement:

Rajagopalachari to Akbar Hydari, 29 July 1939

Rajagopalachari Papers, File No. 92, NMML

Thyagarayanagar

Madras

29 July 1939

My Dear Sir Akbar,

I am very sorry to read news of the most recent and tragic happenings in your place. I have your letters accompanying the State documents.

I understand that Gandhiji has telegraphed to you about the Arya Samaj settlement. I have asked the President of the All India Arya Samaj League, Mr G.S. Gupta, Speaker of the Central Provinces' Assembly to go to you. He said he would gladly meet you if you would see him and if his going would be not unwelcome to you. I hope you have received my telegram and have asked him to go and meet you, unless the recent happenings prevented it.

Permit me to repeat my grateful thanks for your giving such long hearings and patient consideration in respect of this Arya Samaj affair. Devadas Gandhi¹ equally appreciates your kindness. I had hoped that things would be settled completely, but there seems to be still something to be done. At any rate, the Arya Samaj leaders think that you could give them something more as they do not understand your difficulties as I do. But we have no right these days to expect people to understand. Ignorance and unreasonableness are conditions under which we must work contently and produce some result.

The mischievous writings in the 'Andhra' of Bezwada of which you have taken notice and sent me a copy are unfortunately not actionable. There are half-a-dozen persons here who have specialized in this kind of mischief. I have not enough powers under the constitution to deal with such mischief makers in the manner in which I would with a perfect conscience act if I had the powers.

I hope your health has improved. The happenings of this week do not conduce to recovery. But all the same I hope you are getting strong if only because of the work which confronts your Government and which you have to tackle.

¹ Devadas Gandhi (1900-57) son of Mahatma Gandhi, born in Durban (South Africa); he did not have any conventional education and was sent first to Gurukul Kangri and then to Santiniketan; married Laxmi, daughter of C. Rajagopalachari. Devadas joined the Khilafat and Non-Cooperation movements and suffered imprisonment; accompanied his father to London during Second Round Table Conference; was arrested again in 1933 and during 'Quit India' movement.

The main field of activity of Devadas was however, not politics but Journalism. In 1920-21, he joined the *Independent* in Allahabad, owned by Motilal Nehru. Later in 1923-24, he assisted his father in running the *Young India* and *Navajivan*. From 1933, he was with Hindustan Times (Delhi) till his death.

21. Communal Tension in Hyderabad:
Akbar Hydari to Rajagopalachari, 2 August 1939
Rajagopalachari Papers, File No. 92, NMML

*Hyderabad
Deccan
2 August 1939.*

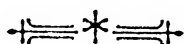
My dear Rajagopalachari,

Thank you for your letters of the 28th and 29th July.

I much appreciate your understanding of our peculiar problems. While the present communal tension continues (and believe me it is directly traceable to the Arya Samaj Campaign, not only in my opinion but in that also of English officers who can form an impartial assessment of the situation here), it is impossible to make any change and still carry both communities with the Government. The reception of the Reforms by a certain section of the Muslims must have opened the eyes of British India Politicians to the complications of Hyderabad Administration.

As to your suggestion that I should see Gupta, this is, I am afraid, politically not practicable and you will, I am sure, appreciate the reasons why we have adopted the principle that we cannot negotiate with other than subjects of his Exalted Highness. We are however, always ready to explain the position to others and I have just written to Mr Gupta in reply to his request to 'clarify the position'. Public opinion would not tolerate negotiation with representatives from outside the State or behind the back of other communities affected, and, however carefully conversations were manageable they would be represented as a surrender to outside influence and a betrayal of the Sovereign position of the State. Furthermore, any decision so reached would be condemned to opposition from the outset and we might be faced with tactics similar to those pursued by the Arya Samaj. The unfortunate disturbances of the last few days have made the atmosphere even more difficult. You will no doubt make this clear in your own way to Mr Gupta who will understand that there is nothing personal involved. Matters can well be cleared up through correspondence or through the medium of our own people.

I am not as well as I would like to be, but hope to get away for a short holiday before long. If our friends, the enemy, will trust us, all will in due course be well.



22. Hyderabad Reforms: T.B. Sapru to Akbar Hydari, 2 August 1939

File No. 740, Constitutional Affairs Department, Nizam's Government, AP State Archives

*Camp: Chashmashahi House
Srinagar
2 August 1939*

My dear Akbar,

I am extremely grateful to you for your kind letter of 21st July and for your kind sentiments towards me. My operation in May last was a far more serious affair than people were allowed to know. I have been here now ever since the 28th June and the change to Kashmir has done me an immense amount of good. My wound is healed up but it is still raw and will require the protection of a bandage for a week or so. Nevertheless I have gained much strength and am able to walk about and drive about in the car. The house in which I am living is ideally situated in the midst of wonderful scenery and commands a most excellent view of the famous Dal Lake. Altogether I am feeling much better now and I am hoping to go back to Allahabad in the first week of September.

I was very sorry to hear that you also were taken ill. I do hope nothing serious was the matter with you and that you are your old self again. I should be grateful if you could just drop me a line to say how you are.

I have read all that has appeared in the papers about the Hyderabad Reforms. It was not to be expected that everybody would be satisfied with those reforms. Taking a broad view of the nature of those reforms they seems to me to take a very distinct departure from the old system and constitute a deliberate move towards constitutional form of government. They in British India are displeased with your reforms because they do not go far enough and the Muslims in Hyderabad fear that they have gone too far. As a wise statesman you will, I have no doubt, interpret all this correctly. Of course the functional representation which you have introduced is a novel feature and as an experience it is worth trying even though it has been subjected to much criticism on the ground that it does not give the majority community the representation to which in view of its numbers it feels it is entitled. I do not think that these reforms are the last words on the subject of constitutional advance and I treat them as the first stage and it would be idle for any one to say what developments may take place after a few years if these reforms are successfully worked. Nevertheless the position in Hyderabad is causing much anxiety to every one as it must be to you. I fear there is room for improvement in your publicity that while the our side public knows what is said against Hyderabad, very few know your version.

I have been following with much interest all that appears in the newspapers and all that I hear from friends about the Federation. As I wrote to you last you can legitimately criticize the Provincial Governors for their failure to protect the States in the discharge of their special responsibility under section 53; on the other hand it may be urged that the present position in British India is very peculiar. Eight Provinces are under the control of Congress Government which work as a single whole and the Governors feel that no alternative Governments are possible. The position will, it may be hoped, be different after the establishment of the Federation and the Governor-General may then feel himself in a stronger position to discharge his special responsibility in this matter. Nevertheless I feel that you will be justified in demanding a clear and authoritative statement to the effect that the protection afforded by section 12(1)(g) is going to be a real one.

The Hindu-Muslim position seems to me to be going from bad to worse and it is a curious comment on our pretension of nationalism that each community should be so suspicious of the other. I should have thought that there was plenty of room in this country for both the communities to live and to let each other live in peace and harmony but we people express their surprise at the

present position. I am always tempted to ask 'whether we have a right to expect any other fruits when we have deliberately in the past sown seeds of discord'? In my opinion most of the trouble in the country is due to our psychological attitude and to our perverted reading of history. I shall not, however, trouble you any further with these reflections...

23. Hindu Mahasabha and Hyderabad Satyagraha:

M.M. Malviya to M.S. Aney, 14 August 1939

M.S. Aney Papers, Subject File No. 11, 1939-40, part 2, NMML

Birla Park

Calcutta

14 August 1939

My dear Mr Aney,

I thank you for your letter of 23 June 1939, relating to the Hyderabad Satyagraha. Let me offer you my hearty congratulations on the very valuable help you gave to the Aryas and other Hindus of the Hyderabad State, and outside also, by presiding over their conference at Sholapur and recently by publishing your statement regarding the brutal treatment meted out to Satyagrahis in the Aurangabad Jail. The Arya League has rightly placed you in the forefront of those who offered them help and encouragement in their very difficult struggle.

The reforms, which the Nizam Government has recently introduced, though open to objections in many respects, and declarations and assurances contained in the communiqués will, if they are worked in the proper spirit, make a great and welcome change in the political atmosphere within the Hyderabad State.

I agree with you that the Aryas, Sikhs and other Hindus who carried on Satyagraha or supported it, have reason to feel gratified at the success which they have achieved.

Trusting you are well,

Yours sincerely,

24. V.D. Savarkar¹ on the Decision of the Arya Samaj Council

Statement to the Press, *National Call*, 16 August 1939

New Delhi

16 August 1939

'I appreciate whole-heartedly the decision arrived at by the Arya Samajists Council at Nagpur calling off the Civil Resistance Movement and gratefully acknowledge on behalf of the Hindu Mahasabha their thankful recognition of the co-operation of the Mahasabha in the fight which they have telegraphically conveyed to me. Thus the pan-Hindu forces continued solid and united throughout the struggle and have come out of it with flying colours.'

'Bravely indeed did the Arya Samaj face the ordeal and it has come out of it not only unscathed but with added vigour and glory. It has proved to a hilt that the great Mission of Hindu Sanghatan which Maharishi Dayanand Saraswati founded was not entrusted into unworthy hands.'

¹ Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, b. 1883; educ. Poona and London; imprisoned several times during freedom struggle; In the forefront of the Hindu Mahasabha movement since 1937 and presided over all its sessions from 1937 to 1947.

25. In the Aftermath of the Hyderabad Agitation:
Akbar Hydari to Sapru, 21 August 1939

File No. 740, Constitutional Affairs Department, Nizam Government, AP State Archives

Hyderabad
21 August 1939

My dear Sir Tej,

Many thanks for your letter of 2 August 1939.

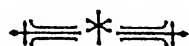
I am so sorry you were unable to come to the Birthday celebrations but I am glad in any case that you are taking rest in Kashmir. I hope you have by now fully recovered from your recent illness which caused us all extreme anxiety. I am myself better now and my proposed holiday is sure to bring sufficient rest to recoup.

I find on the whole that our reforms scheme was well received in spite of the very contentious nature of the subject in itself and of certain of its suggestion which has the virtue of originality but which could not be expected to appeal to the communalists of either side. Joint electorates, 50:50 between Muslims and Hindus, functional representation, these are points likely to be opposed by one section or the other in British India where the lines adopted for constitutional reforms have so far been totally different.

You rightly point out the need for improved publicity. During the first three months of the recent agitation, we were completely submerged in a sea of unscrupulous and false propaganda. The machinery of Government publicity, as you know, works necessarily slower because any information given has to be made certain of. This is not the case with organisations which are out to abuse and to spread any and every kind of news, false or true, that may serve their ends. We also found to our cost that many Congress papers were under communal influences and as a result, refused to accept our matter, some of them edited by very distinguished public leaders, even refusing to publish contradictions of news which had appeared in their own papers and which proved to be false. It took us some time, through personal contacts, reasoning and facts conveyed individually, to create a better press after which I know that the Arya Samajists complained in several quarters of the refusal even of the Congress press to accept their matter! We also brought out for the first time pamphlets, handbills, and leaflets, which were distributed in large numbers at stations, village fairs, markets and specified localities in certain cities. In all these, we tried our best to avoid anything of the nature of mud-flinging and the publicity done was largely of an indirect nature, sometimes unofficial.

Regarding Section 12(1)(g), we have been exploring (and I understand the Chamber has asked you to explore) and possibility of obtaining some legal protection against subversive activities directed from one unit against another. Both Section 12(1)(g) and Section 52 have proved failures and in a way the assurances conveyed to the Congress imply that the safeguards under them will not be used except in exceptional circumstances. At one time, we had been assured that they would be living reality. It is difficult to conceive of any method of legal protection in this matter but we are awaiting the opinion that you will give in this connection to the Chamber.

You rightly deplore the worsening of the Hindu-Muslim position. I am, however, an optimist in this as in many matters and still hope that good sense, reason and the inevitable fact of the two communities having to live side by side will some day or other lead to a better understanding. A good deal depends on the text books and teaching on which our children and youths are brought up.



26. In the Aftermath of the Hyderabad Agitation:
Sapru to Akbar Hydari, 17 September 1939

File No. 740, Constitutional Affairs Department, Nizam Government, AP State Archives

19 Albert Road
Allahabad
17 September 1939

My dear Sir Akbar,

Many thanks for your letter of 21st August. I returned from Kashmir on 5th September and have since been keeping well. When I was in Kashmir I was following in the newspapers that report of the affairs of Hyderabad. If you will permit me to say so you deserve congratulations from every quarter for the manner in which you have dealt with the situation. I am glad that the agitation of the Arya Samajists is over and that they are now satisfied with the state of things in Hyderabad. I never for a moment assumed or thought that you could be a party to the suppression of religious freedom. The matter for regret is that these people did not approach you earlier.

As regards your reforms, can you imagine any scheme of reforms in British India or in any Indian State which is immune from hostile criticism? On the whole from what I have seen in the press, your scheme has had a good press. It is true that the Hindu majority are dissatisfied because they have been put on the same level as the Muslim minority. What has, however, appealed to me most is the system of vocational or functional representation which you have adopted and which has made it unnecessary for you and the State to get itself embroiled in the controversy about joint and separate electorates. Further development is bound to follow if this scheme is worked in the spirit in which it should be.

Now that the Viceroy has declared that the preparations for the establishment of Federation are going to be suspended I do not think it is at all necessary, at any rate, for the present, to discuss the question of efficacy or inefficacy of Section 12(1)(g) of the Government of India Act. It is not true that the Chamber of Princes have consulted me or that they have asked me to express my opinion. I know nothing about the Chamber of Princes. Mr Maqboob Mahmood, who, I believe, is the Secretary of the Chamber of Princes, first sent me a telegram from Bombay saying that he wanted a consultation, then cancelled the engagement. I got a representative of the Nawab of Sachin who has already consulted me and he held before me three or four questions which I answered. The opinion, therefore, was given to the Nawab of Sachin on those three or four questions.

I wonder what you think of the long manifesto of the Congress Committee on the War! I am afraid it is going to complicate the situation. I hope the Muslim League may be wiser.

Thanks for what you say of our Dr Faruqui.

I am leaving tomorrow for Simla as the Viceroy has called me up there to discuss the International situation. I hope to be back here on the 23rd September.

With kindest regards,

27. Report on the Anti-Reforms

File No. 786, 1939. This is a report submitted by Mohammad Mukkhat Ali, of the Office of Commissioner for Police. Andhra Pradesh State Archives

18 October 1939

The Anjuman-I-Ittehad-ul-Muslamin has always been against reforms. It has been striving to mobilize and stir up Muslim sentiment, particularly after the break-down of the peace talks. The

reforms were criticised and disapproved in every way. The Muslim masses were acquainted through the press and platform that the inauguration of reforms would be prejudicial to their supremacy. Rabid Muslim preachers like Waliullah Hussaini and others utilised the Milad-un-Nabi meetings and other religious occasions for preaching 'Jehad'. On 18 March 1939, the Anjuman passed a strongly worded resolution warning the Government that the introduction of Reforms was ill-timed and that it should be postponed. Not only that. Threats were held out in no uncertain terms to oppose the reforms by such means as Satyagraha, block-flag demonstrations, etc. Some of the local newspapers well-known for their anti-reforms tendencies joined hands with the Anjuman. The Waqt published articles such as 'Islahat ka Janaza' and 'Islahat ka Jhula' denouncing the proposed reforms. All this propaganda was bound to react on the Muslim masses, and the first public manifestation of its effects was the reception accorded to HE the President with black flags at the Begumpet Railway Station. Another expression of the growing anxiety of the Muslims was the prayer offered at the huge congregation at the Idgah.

The news that the reforms would be announced had reached every ear through the press. A meeting was convened by Abdur Rahman Rais, editor of the Waqt at the Waqt office and a decision was arrived at to stage a demonstration on the morrow. The volunteers of the Hizbullah and the Anjuman-i-ittihad-ul-Muslamin secretly asked the Muslim merchants not to open their shops the next day and observe a complete 'hartal' as a protest against the reforms.

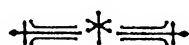
12th Shehrewar

The dawn revealed 'Islahat Murdabad' inscribed on the roads in Hyderguda and near the Bab-e-Hukumath in Khairatabad. Similar inscriptions were made in coal-tar on the walls in Chanchelguda, Yakutpura, Azampura, Malakpet, Bazar-i-Fath Yab Khan, Mushirabad and Lingampalli which were immediately obliterated by the police. A cloth bearing the same words was found at the gate of the Sahifa mosque and posters were noticed on the electric posts. In Kachiguda and Chanchelguda, half a dozen were set loose with pieces of red cloth tied to their backs bearing the following inscriptions in Urdu:

I like Islahat (reforms); Islahat is my name; my motto is progress and unity; welcome me; congratulations to All Yawar on reforms; show me the way to Bab-e-Hukmath; I want to see tasker.

The volunteers of the Anjuman-i-Ittehad-ul-Muslamin stirred out early in the morning to induce a hartal. Some of them wore black badges on the arms or shoulders, which they distributed also to the wayfarers in Pathargatti. Abdur Rahman Rais had prepared a good number of black badges in the night. He gave 2 badges to each of his new boys with instructions to put them on their bicycles and shoulders.

Some of the Muslim shopkeepers were inclined to open their shops, but the volunteers approached and begged them to do nothing of the sort. Khaja Bahauddin, Mohamed Ahsan and others also moved about in cars mounted with black flags making similar appeals to the Muslim merchants. The result was that almost all the Muslim shops remained closed...



28. All Hyderabad Labour Conference

This is a confidential note prepared by one Mohammad Farhatullah of the First Taluqdar's Office in the Aurangabad district and sent to the Secretary to the Judicial, Police and General departments. See Judicial, Police and General Deptts., Nizam's Government, File No. 53/49F, Andhra Pradesh State Archives

19 November 1939

The 1st All-Hyderabad Labour Conference was held at Aurangabad on the 18th and 19th November 1939 under the Presidentship of Syed Abdullah Brelvi, editor of the *Bombay Chronicle*.

The convening of this Conference, it will be remembered, was part of the State Congress programme for November and State Congress workers such as D.L. Phatak, Ramanand Tirath, Kashinath Rao Vaidya, Govind Rao Nanal and Sirajul Hasan Tirmizi were mainly responsible for its inception although they did not all take a prominent part in the proceedings. Two representatives of the NS Railway Union were also present.

The gathering on the first day of the Conference was about 3,000 persons and on the second day of about 15000 including delegates and representatives of workers from all over the Dominion. Prominent among these who attended the Conference were R.A. Khedgikar, a labour leader of Bombay, Comrade Shivanker of Manmad, Haridikar, a worker of the GIP Railway Worker's Union, Abdul Kamid, Muhammad Hussain, Sundaresan, Raghavendra Rao, Doraswami, Office bearers of the NS Railway Union Secunderabad—Sirajul Hasan Tirmizi, Narayan Rao Vaidya, Swami Ramanand Tirath, Govind Rao Nanal, Digamber Rao Bindu, Sridhar Naik, Khurshid Hasan of the Hyderabad Meter Bus & Taxi Union and Pandit Mahajan of Pattan.

The President on his arrival at Aurangabad from Bombay on 18.11.39, was taken out in a procession of about 1,000 persons through the various localities of Aurangabad city and on his way he was also shown the Balwant Mufut Wachnalaya. The procession was headed by about 25 labourers clad in red shirts and certain persons carried red flags bearing the inscriptions 'Hyderabad State Labour Conference', 'Labourers! Become united', 'Give us work or wages', 'Success may come to Labourers', and the processionists at intervals shouted the slogans 'Mazdoor Zindabad—Abdullah Brelvi Zindabad—Inquilab Zindabad—Dunya ke mazdoor ik ho jao' (Workers of the World unite). The procession came to an end at the pandal erected for the Conference where a big red flag has been installed.

The proceedings of the Conference started with the address of Sridhar Naik, Chairman of the Reception Committee, who welcomed the President and requested Sirajul Hasan Tirmizi to open the Conference. In his opening speech Sirajul Hasan Tirmizi described the plight of the labor class and advised the workers to organise themselves in groups, encourage the labour movement and to keep their red flag flying. He complained that all over India neither the capitalists nor the Government had taken any notice of the poor labourers. He reminded the audience that about six years back HEH the Nizam had issued a firman through which he had commanded the promulgation of an act for the welfare of the labour class, but the responsible officers of Government took no notice of the firman and God alone knew where they had thrown it. He concluded his speech by emphasizing the necessity of Hindu-Muslim unity.

Abdullah Brelvi was proposed to the chair by D.L. Pathak of Aurangabad. B.S. Vernkat Rao (Harijan leader of the Secunderabad) in support of the proposal for Presidentship warned the capitalists and all those who were against the labour movement that if they did not help the labourers they would be involved in great difficulties in the very near future.

Abdullah Brelvi in the course of his address said that the Congress Government, in their two years' regime, had done a lot for the good of the labour class, while the British Government had

done nothing during their rule of 150 years. He deplored that the Hyderabad Government had paid no attention towards the labour class although much had been done in British India and other smaller States for the protection of their rights. He warned the Hyderabad Government that its indifference towards the labour class would bring the state a bad name. In referring to home industries he said that they had been suppressed by the British Government and exhorted the audience to divert their attention towards them. He also made a reference to the present war in Europe and said that during the last World War the British Government had promised to grant freedom to India at the end of the war. But they deceived the Indians and perpetrated great atrocities including the Rowlatt Act and the Jallianwalla Bagh firing—on them after the war. This resulted in the Non-cooperation and satyagraha movements by the All-India Congress which brought good results. He pointed out that during the present war Lord Zetland had definitely said that India could not be allowed to frame its open constitution, but even then HE the Viceroy had recently promised to see that India achieved freedom. He asserted that Indians had been deceived once and they could not be deceived again.

The proceedings of the second day were held under the Presidentship of Sridhar Naik as Abdullah Brelvi had left the previous night for Bombay due to some previous engagement. In the beginning about 30 volunteers near the red flag installed in front of the 'pandal' gave a salute with band and sang poems about the freedom of labourers.

A sub-committee of 25 persons was then appointed to frame resolutions. The extent to which the State Congress guided the proceedings can be seen from the fact that this sub-committee included Sirajul Hasan Tirmizi, Govind Rao Nanal, Sridhar Naik, D.L. Pahatkar and Ramanand Tirath.

Ten resolutions came up for discussions in the meetings, which were subsequently passed, and the following are of interest:

1. Supporting the memorandum dated 18 June 1939 submitted by the NS Railway Union to the Government about the Grievances of the Railway Staff, and requesting Government to grant special representation in the new legislature to the members of the Union;
2. Expressing concern at the unrest among the workers of the NS Railway consequent upon the introduction of a service agreement by the railway;
3. Opining that the reforms announced by Government were not only inadequate and unsatisfactory but also reactionary and that the representation given to the labour class was greatly disproportionate, and requesting Government to grant more seats in the Legislature for that class, and protesting against the introduction of the element of communalism as regards the representation of labourers in the new legislature;
4. Urging Government to give legislative effect to the conventions of the International Labour Conference for promoting the welfare of the labourers;
5. Requesting Government to appoint a committee of officials and non-officials to enquire into the plight of the labouring population of the State;
6. Requesting Government to initiate legislation on the lines of those prevalent in British India such as Trade Union Act, Workers' Compensation Act, Maternity Benefit Act, Payment of Wages Act, etc.;
7. Appointing a committee consisting of the following persons to:
 - (a) popularize the Trade Union movement in Hyderabad State,
 - (b) Strengthen the existing Trade Union,
 - (c) establish Trade Union in industrial centers where they did not exist, and
 - (d) frame a draft constitution for Federation of Trade Union, to be placed before the next session of the Conference for its adoption.

Sirajul Hasan Tirmizi	President
D.L. Pathak	Secretary
S.V. Naik	Member
Khurshid Hasan	"
Sheikh Omar	"
Narayan Rao	"
Syed Habibuddin	"

Ratilal, and one representative each from the Railway, Coal & Cement Mines, Bidi, Cigarettes, Buttons, Sugar factories, Match factories and Handloom weavers to be nominated by the respective Unions.

Speeches were made by Narayan Rao Chauhan, Sirajul Hasan Tirmizi, Sridhar Naik, Raghvendra Rao, B.S. Venkat Rao, D.L. Pathak, Hardikar of the GIP Railway Workers' Union and Khurshid Hasan in support of the resolutions in which they described the plight of the labour class and exhorted them to organise themselves and to achieve their rights.

Narayan Rao Chauhan in his speech remarked that unless capitalism, which was sucking the blood of the labourer was abolished, the condition of the labourers could not improve. He exhorted the labourers to achieve their full rights and pointed out that theirs was a cause in which there was no difference of Hindu and Muslim.

Raghvendra Rao of the NS Railway Union declared that they had decided that they would not only co-operate with the Labour Conference at Aurangabad but would keep their connections with all the labour Unions of the world, and warned the Government to that effect. He assured the audience that whenever there was necessity the members of the NS Railway Union would be the first to shed their blood.

B.S. Venkat Rao, Harijan leader, deplored that the labourers of his community were compelled to do forced labour without any remuneration, and not only the capitalists but also Government officials were responsible for such atrocities. He pointed out that a firman in that connection was also being ignored, and warned the Government that it could not continue such atrocities any longer as an awakening had been created among the labour class.

Sirajul Hasan Tirmizi, in moving resolution No. (3), condemned the Reforms as useless and reactionary and said that his heart ached and burned when he read them. He gave a history of the old Legislative Assembly which was established 50 years back and alleged that its members were made to agree with the Government by the officials. Hyderabad People's Convention was then established and certain persons underwent great hardships, which resulted in the new Reforms that were in themselves useless. The legislature proposed in the new constitution was to have only 85 seats while on the basis of population of the state, the number of seats would have been much larger. Forty-three seats were given to Government members while 42 had been equally divided between Hindus and Muslims. He contended that this division was wrong as the Hindus were in a majority and they should have been given more seats as compared with Muslims. He, therefore, criticised the Muslim Agitation over the Reforms and said that it had brought a bad name to the ruler and had created an upheaval in the country. He believed that the Hindus had a real cause for complaint but they did not raise a single voice of resentment. He asked the Muslims why they were suspicious of the Hindus and promised on their behalf that the Hindus would not oppose the Muslims in getting half the seats out of the 42 granted to the two communities in the legislature. He reminded the Muslims of the days when they were in a hopeless minority and remarked that the Hindus could have crushed them like ants, but they (Hindus) bestowed favours on them (Muslims). He opposed the principle of nominating labour representatives to the new legislature

on communal basis and also considered their representation to the labour class on communal basis, although the labourers were supposed to have no religion. He also disapproved of the condition that both the representatives should belong to the labour class as, due to illiteracy, they would not be able to protect their rights.

Digamber Rao Bindu translated the above speech in Marathi and added that on the one hand Government had granted representation to the labour class in the legislature, while on the other it had made no arrangements for their education.

Messages of sympathy for the conference were received, among others, from Mrs Sarojini Naidu, Mr B.G. Kher, ex-Premier of Bombay, Mr V.V. Giri, ex-labour Minister of Madras, Dr Muhammad Ashraf, M.N. Roy, Guruswamy, ex-President of the Railway Union, Dr Jaisurya Naidu, Lakshman Rao Ganu, Pleader of Hyderabad, Manik Chanu Pahade of Aurangabad and Mrs Barkat Rai.

At the close of the Conference the volunteers, numbering about 70, shouted slogans of 'Vande Mataram' and 'Inquilab Zindabad'.

19 November 1939

Resolution passed by the First Hyderabad State Labour Conference

1. This Conference affirms the loyalty to HEH the Nizam and the Asaf-Jahi Dynasty.
2. This Conference gives its entire support to the memorandum dated 18 June 1939 of grievances of HEH the NS Railway workers submitted by their Union to HEH the Nizam's Govt. and requests the benign Government of HEH the Nizam to redress the grievances of the Railway staff.
3. This Conference further supports demand of HEH the NS Railway Employees Union, which is the foremost Trade Union representing the largest organised labour in the State for special representation in the legislature contemplated under the Reforms.
4. This Conference views with concern the unrest caused in the minds of the workers of the NS Railway in consequence of the issue by the Railway Administration of a Service Agreement to be signed by the Staff and hopes that the situation would be eased by a speedy settlement of the matter between the administration and the Union of the workers.
5. This Conference is of opinion that the Reforms declared by the Government of HEH the Nizam are not only inadequate and unsatisfactory but also reactionary. This Conference is also definitely of opinion that the representation given to the labour is greatly disproportionate and requests the Govt. of HEH the Nizam that it should be given more seats in the Legislative Assembly of the State. This Conference also protests against introducing the element of communalism as regards the representation of labour in the Legislature.
6. In view of the fact that Convention of the International Labour Conference promotes the Welfare of Labour and many of them have been ratified by most countries including India and Legislative Action has been taken on them in these countries this Conference urges on the Government of HEH the Nizam to give legislative effect to these Convention.
7. This Conference desires to bring to the knowledge of the Government the growing plight of the workers of the State and requests the Government to appoint a Committee of official and non-official to enquire into the conditions of the Labouring population of the State.
8. This Conference urges all Employers not to put obstacles in the way of formation of Trade Unions of workers and to recognise all the Trade Unions.

9. This Conference request the Government of HEH the Nizam to initiate legislation on the lines of these prevalent in British India such as Trade Union Act, Workmen's Compensation Act, Maternity Benefit Act, Payment of Wages Act etc.
10. This Conference appoints a committee consisting of fifteen members to:
 - (a) popularize the Trade Union movement in Hyderabad state.
 - (b) to strengthen the existing Trade Union.
 - (c) establish Trade Union in industrial centers where they do not exist, and
 - (d) frame a draft constitution for Federation of Trade Union, to be placed before the next session of the Conference for its adoption.

Syed Sirajul Hasan Tirmizi	(Hyderabad)	President
Barrister Shridhar V. Naik	"	Treasurer
D.L. Pathak	(Aurangabad)	Secretary
Syed Khurshid Hasan	(Hyderabad)	Member
Sheikh Omar	(Aurangabad)	"
Narayan Rao	(Telangana)	"
Syed Habibuddin	(Aurangabad)	"

One from Telangana and from Karnataka and six others representing: Railway, Coal & Cement Mines, Bidi, Cigarettes, Buttons, Sugar factories, Match factories and Handloom weavers, etc. will be co-opted. The representative of the Railway is being nominated by the Executive Committee of the HEH the NS Railway Employees Union¹.

Syed Abdullah Brelvi (1891-1949) early education in Anjuman e-Islam High School, Bombay, graduation from Elphinstone college in 1911; Assistant Editor, *Bombay Chronicle*, 1915; 1920, Editor, *Bombay Chronicle* till 1949, President All India Newspaper Editors Conference in 1945; influenced by Gandhi and loyal Congressman, firm believer of Hindu-Muslim unity, presided over Gujarat State People's Conference in Ahmedabad.

X KOHLAPUR, AUNDH AND RAMDURG

1. Peasants March in Kohlapur

Hindu, 16 January 1939

16 January 1939

Peasants numbering about five thousand arrived at the Kohlapur railway station by midday, led by Mr Nanasaheb Jagdale, with the object of placing their demands before the Maharaja.¹ The demands were reduction in land revenue, safeguarding of the civil liberties and the introduction of responsible government.

About four trains, including two specials, brought the peasants to Kohlapur from villages in the state. In view of the march, the Kohlapur Durbar has arranged for additional armed and lathi police and horsemen to control traffic in the vicinity of the station and on the principal roads leading to the station.

The Maharaja himself arrived on the scene at 4 p.m. and personally addressed the peasants, assuring them of his sympathetic consideration of the demands. The crowd dispersed after the Maharaja's assurance.

A sensation prevailed in the city the whole day but no untoward incident is reported except a minor skirmish at Shahupuri.

The Durbar immediately issued a Press note explaining the Durbar's policy and attitude towards the peasants' demand.

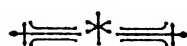
A Press note issued by the Kohlapur Durbar says that in spite of His Highness the Chhatrapati Maharaja Saheb's notification announcing that it was his intention to bring the rates of revenue assessment throughout the State on a level to that the adjoining British India areas, about 2,000 farmers came to Kohlapur by the three morning trains. Precautionary measures had to be taken, and the arrangements proved to be perfect. The people, as they arrived by the three trains, were shepherded by the railway police outside the railway yard and as soon as they came into the State's jurisdiction were informed of the fact that having come to Kohlapur contrary to instructions, they had formed themselves into an unlawful assembly, and consequently in those circumstances the authorities were bound to disperse them.

While the authorities were dealing with the situation by explaining the policy of the Durbar, His Highness arrived on the scene. He said that he was deeply pained that they had considered it fitting to come to Kohlapur in spite of his expressed desire, but now that they had come, His Highness was glad to meet them and assured the gathering that it was his uncompromising intention to do all he could for the betterment of his people and that they might remain assured on this score. He asked them to return peacefully. The people were doubtless satisfied and availed themselves of the lorries provided by the Durbar for their transportation.

It was obvious, the note continues, that the pacifying and conciliatory attitude adopted by the Durbar during the progress of the agrarian agitation during the last few weeks had been entirely misconstrued as a sign of weakness and recently people from areas outside this State carried out an extremely incitable propaganda, bordering on an attempt to inflame the feelings of the public to open the violent methods of aggression and these outside agitators did not hesitate even to incite hatred towards the person of His Highness and the gadi of Kohlapur. The authorities, therefore, came to the reluctant conclusion that they could not any longer regard the agitation as being one confined to the expression of economic grievances or for the propagation of any political aims and objects and that people were being incited to activities which were divorced from all internal problems and that adequate arrangements must of necessity be made to secure respect for law and order and for the maintenance of tranquility. Military forces of 100 and a police force of 50, in addition to the usual strength, has, therefore, been placed in Shirol, the taluka town of the district of that name to meet any emergency that may arise. It may be mentioned that the Shirol Peta is only district that has been affected. It has a population of about fifty thousand. It is surrounded on three sides either by British India territory or the Patwardhan States and consequently the dissemination of incitable propaganda has been comparatively easy.

The note concludes that in connection with the granting of rights to the people as regards of freedom of speech His Highness has conveyed the assurance that the matter was under consideration and an announcement would be made shortly.

¹ The ruling house traces its descent from a younger son of Shivaji. The present ruler is Lt. Col. Sir Rajaram Shahu Chhatragat, with a dynastic salute of 19 guns.



2. The Peasant in Kohlapur

Extract from the Bombay Province Weekly Letter No. 3, 21 January 1939, Home Deptt. (Sp.), File No. 917(17), 1939, Maharashtra State Record Office

21 January 1939

A 'march' of about 2,000 peasants in order to represent their grievances to His Highness the Maharaja in person at Kohlapur was carried out on the 15th January. The organizer was a State subject known as Nanasaheb Jagdale and he was assisted by N.G. Gore and H.M. Joshi, Congress workers from Poona. The Maharaja adopted a conciliatory policy and said that he had already granted concessions in Land Revenue and would sympathetically consider their other demands and announce his decision within a fortnight. The marchers, who were satisfied for the time being, were then sent back to their villages by train and motor at the expense of the State. It is learnt from a Press report that at a meeting at Ankli in Satara District on the 17th January, which was attended by P.M. Bapat of Poona and N.M. Ghanekar of Satara, a resolution was passed expressing dissatisfaction with the promises of the Maharaja and announcing that another 'march' would be held on the 31st January unless the assurance given were fully carried out.

3. Kohlapur State's People's First Conference at Kupwad

AISPC Papers, File No. 21, NMML

10 April 1939

The first Session of the Kohlapur State's People's First Conference will be held on the 15 April 1939 at Kupwad in British Territory, near Sangali. Sjt Dr Pattabhi Sitaramayya has consented to preside.

As the proposed conference is meeting under peculiar circumstances it will not be out of place to briefly recount the events during the last six months.

The determination of the Kohlapur people to obtain Civil Liberties, Reduction in land revenue etc. was brought to the notice of the authorities when four thousand peasants marched to the capital on 25 December 1938.

Not satisfied by the promises given by the Prime Minister a march was taken out again on the 15th of January 1939. The marches were met by His Highness the Maharaja of Kohlapur and he was good enough to place his word to fulfill the demands.

Encouraged by the assurances of His Highness the Maharaja Saheb, the people under the leadership of Sjt Madhavrao Begal decided to hold Kohlapur Praja Parishad. So brisk was the work and so ready was the response that within a short span of a month and half the organizers were able to enroll more than 60,000 members, and there was no doubt left that the Kohlapur Praja Parishad would hence forever become the most powerful organ of the Kohlapur people's will.

Then suddenly Sjt Begal was arrested under the 124A. Immediately afterward the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1908 was promulgated, the Parishad was declared illegal and a regime of terror started in the State. Upto this time scores have been detained in custody and flogged and searches are taking place indiscriminately.

It is our proud privilege to have served under the guidance of Sjt Shankarrao Deo and even of Mahatmaji in these hours of trial.

The organizers of the conference solicit your co-operation in making this conference a success and request you to attend the conference. If, however, you do not find it convenient to attend the Session we request you to send your blessings.

4. Gandhiji's Advice to Kohlapur State Leaders

Questions and Answer of Gandhi and the Deputations, *Bombay Chronicle*, 9 June 1939

Bombay
9 June 1939

A deputation of the Kohlapur State Praja Parishad headed by Mr Ratnappa Dharmappa Khubhar awaited on Mahatma Gandhi on Tuesday. It consisted of Messrs Khumbar, Jagdale, Ghugre, Ladage and Kodolikar.

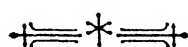
Deputation: Even in spite of the fact that at present the Kohlapur State authorities are not in a mood to negotiate with the Parishad workers in view of your latest statement on the Travancore State, should negotiations be started with the State authorities?

Mahatma Gandhi: My statement is meant only for the Travancore State. I know more than any one that the State authorities in any State are never willing to have negotiations with their people. This I have realised much more from the talks I had with Mr Virawala in Rajkot. Negotiations should always be started in an honourable way and as such for negotiations there should be a suitable and proper atmosphere. If that is not possible in your State it is far better for you not to start negotiation at an immature time. I found that opportunity in Travancore and I have issued that statement concerning Travancore only.

Deputation: What should those workers do on whom notices have been served by the Durbar greeting them to present themselves before the Court on pain of losing their properties through confiscation?

Mahatma Gandhi: This is objectionable for the workers to present themselves before the Court. It is by disobeying such orders the properties were confiscated, it would be noble to remain outside the State and to work for their ideals like Garibaldi, Mazzini etc. It is a sin even to hold properties in a State where no law prevails. Here you may think that the people would think a different way about your staying outside the State and get demoralized. But if you really lose your property and if the people are convinced that you work sincerely for them, you need not fear demoralization of any kind in them. You should always be sure that self sacrifice carries public support.

During his talk with the deputation Mahatmaji often pointed out that he would not object to taking direct steps of civil resistance if really any state people were ready for it and added that he always recommended it. But he would not be willing to allow any state people to launch satyagraha unless he was satisfied that they were fully prepared for it. Gandhiji advised the Deputationists to wait on Pandit Jawaharlal also, and they are meeting him tomorrow.



5. Lull in State will soon pass away

Nehru talks to a deputation of the Kohlapur State Praja Parishad, *Bombay Chronicle*, 10 June 1939

Bombay
9 June 1939

The view that the postponement of the demands for Responsible Government in Indian States should only be temporary, at the most for two or three years was expressed by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, president of the All-India States' People's Conference to a deputation of the Kohlapur State Praja Parishad, which waited on him today.

The Deputation was headed by Mr Ratnappa Dharmappa Khumbar, Secretary of the Parishad.

It will be recalled that Mahatmaji, on whom the deputation waited a few days ago, instructed it to interview Panditji in this connection.

The Deputation explained the repressive measures adopted by the Kohlapur State to put down popular agitation in the State and placed before Panditji the interim report of the Inquiry Committee, appointed by the Deccan States' People's Conference, to investigate the alleged atrocities in the State.

It is understood that Panditji in the course of the discussion, expressed the view that the policy of Mahatma Gandhi had caused a lull in the State movement for the time being. He himself did not understand what Mahatmaji meant by lowering the demands of the States' People.

'In my opinion,' Panditji is said to have told the deputation, 'the lowering should never mean giving up the demands. I will not object to the postponement of the demands for Responsible Government for the time being, but it should be only for a short period. In my opinion even it may be two or three years and not more than that. When we postpone the demands for the time being we should struggle vigorously for the preliminary demands of civil liberty and of the right of organising the people so that they may be able to run Responsible Government.'

He is further understood to have observed that the lull and despondency, which was found everywhere in the States movement, would only last for a short time and advised the deputation to work with vigour to create strength among the people.

6. Aundh Reform Scheme

Hindu, 3 January 1939

3 January 1939

The Raja Saheb of Aundh,¹ who had consultations with Mahatma Gandhi at Shegaon in regard to the proposed reforms to be given to the subjects of his State, is stated to have drafted finally the reforms and they will, it is understood, be declared formally at the present State Assembly session on the 21st instant.

The reforms start from the village where all literate adults are given franchise to elect the Panchayat which will possess wide administrative and judiciary powers. A taluka Council will be constituted consisting of the Presidents of all the Panchayats of the villages in that Taluka and half of the revenue of the Taluka will be allocated to this Council for redistribution among its villages. There will in all be five such Taluka Councils in the State and they will send their President and two members each to represent them in the Assembly. The Strength of the Assembly will thus be only 15.

This Legislative Assembly is indissoluble and will renew itself gradually as and when the tenure of office of its members expires. This body will be the supreme authority in the State, the Ruler being the first servant and the bearer of the conscience of the people. He will be empowered to return any bill for reconsideration to the Assembly for three sessions. He will control the relations of the State with the Paramount Power and call extraordinary session of the Assembly. He may suspend the Government immediately after.

Appointment of Ministers

The Ruler will choose three members of the Assembly and appoint one of them as Prime Minister and the other two as Ministers to carry on the Government. The Ministers will be responsible to the Assembly.

Half of the State revenue will be allocated to the Panchayats, the other half going to the State coffers and the budget will be votable by the Assembly. The Ruler's privy purse will be votable after five years during which period it will remain at Rs 36,000 per annum.

Basic education will be made universal and compulsory. A campaign for liquidation of adult illiteracy within a year will be immediately started.

Bulk of the justice of the State will be administered by the Panchayats. There will be no charge whatsoever for the Panchayat's work. There will be a High Court for controlling the work of the Panchayats and for all residual justice. Just like the Public Prosecutor, the State will appoint a Public Defender to provide free legal advice.

The Government will not be subject to a confidence motion for the first two years and the Ruler will have power to nominate five members to the Assembly for the first five years.

The several political and civic rights, including the right to work and earn livelihood, will be guaranteed in the preamble of this new constitution.

¹ Shrimant Bhavanrao Shrinivasrao alias Balasaheb Pant (1868–1951), Raja of Aundh.

² See *CWMG*, Vol. 68, p. 90.

7. Constitution for Aundh: Raja of Aundh to B.G. Kher, 13 January 1939

B.G. Kher Papers, File No. 6, NMML

Camp Kundal
13 January 1939

My dear Balasaheb

You have already received a copy of the draft of the new constitution which is to be introduced in my state. As it is a historic occasion, I wish there should be some distinguished personality at the time of its inauguration. The session of my State Assembly begins on the 21st instant when the bill is to be discussed in it. I request you to come to Aundh at that time and address my subjects about the importance of this measure.

It is highly important that my new Constitution should be launched amidst very inspiring and congenial atmosphere. I feel that your visit at the time of the passage of the new Constitution through the existing Assembly will help us and the people of Aundh enormously in the proper working of the Constitution. We realise how your time is all chalked out beforehand, but as our Premier we have a claim on you. Mahatmaji has also written to you in this connection. We hope you will not disappoint us.

The date is 21st, the time is any time that would suit you. The programme will be sent for your approval as soon as you accept our invitation. I hope you will kindly realise the urgency and importance of the occasion and concede to my request, and let me know.

8. Responsible Government for Aundh

Bombay Chronicle, 23 January 1939

Aundh
21 January 1939

'We take a great step which will be watched by all India and there lie heavy responsibilities on you of working it successfully'. Thus declared the Rajasaheb of Aundh inaugurating the new constitution granting Responsible Government which passed the third reading in the State Legislative Council this evening in the State temple in front of the Aundh family Deity and in the presence of the Hon'ble Mr B.G. Kher, Prime Minister of Bombay, Messrs. Shankar Rao Deo and Gangadhar Rao Deshpande.

The Rajasaheb exhorted his subjects to work the constitution with the Spirit of self-sacrifice and sincerity; by this alone could the constitution be worked successfully.

The Rajasaheb announced the appointment of a committee of three to review the financial position of the State in view of permanent remissions in land revenue amounting to Rs 50,000 and that the judicial department will be inaugurated in July.

Mr B.G. Kher was given a royal reception by Aundh. Large crowds received him a mile outside the capital of Aundh and took him in procession in the State carriage through streets. After witnessing the passing of the Constitution's third reading in the State Council, Mr Kher was conducted to a decorated dais in open space outside the palace where a unique function and the first of its kind took place when for the first time a Prime Minister from a British province was presented with an official welcome in an Indian State.

Over five thousand people attended the function of the presentation of an address to Hon. Mr B.G. Kher this evening at which the Rajasaheb of Aundh himself presented it and welcomed him. The function opened with the hoisting of the tricolour flag and 'Bhagwa Jhenda' (Aundh State Flag) by the Hon'ble Mr B.G. Kher and Rajasaheb respectively.

Speaking about the significance of flag hoisting, the Raja Saheb said that the tricolour was a symbol of India unity and the Bhagwa Jhenda represented self sacrifice and exhorted his subjects to take the lesson from these two flags to heart for the progress and salvation of their common country.

Mr Shankar Rao Deo congratulating the Raja Saheb and the subjects of Aundh characterised the voluntary grant by Rajasaheb of Responsible Government to his subjects as a victory of non violence and love and expressed the hope that even as the might of the Ganges springs from a small source, a noble act by a small state like Aundh will be followed by other Indian States.

Mr Gangadhar Rao Deshpande paid a tribute to the courage of the Rajasaheb in granting Responsible Government to his subjects and reminded the subjects of the heavy responsibilities that have fallen on their shoulders that day and also reminded them of the words of the Rajasaheb while granting that Constitution namely the proviso of the observance of non-violence and truth.

He felicitated the Rajasaheb on the new era inaugurated by him in the State, which example he hoped would be followed by other Indian States. He characterised the Rajasaheb's voluntary act of granting Responsible Government to his subjects as one of love and self-sacrifice and said that by calling himself the first servant and bearer of the conscience of the people of Aundh, the

Rajasaheb of Aundh had acted in consonance with modern democratic principles, in which power is derived from the people as well as with the ancient Hindu Ramrajya tradition in which the king considered himself as the first servant of his people.

The Rajkumar, Appasaheb¹, proposing a vote of thanks said that they should take an oath to banish illiteracy from Aundh within three months. He announced that hereafter January 21 would be a public holiday in honour of the day of granting Responsible Government.

¹ Appa Saheb Pant, an Oxford graduate, shared the zeal of his father for public service and rose to important position in free India; Author of *A Moment in Time*.

9. Aundh has set example to others

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru's signed article under the caption 'Aundh' issued to the Press, *Tribune*, 1 February 1939.

Lucknow
31 January 1939

The following signed article of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru under the caption 'Aundh' has been issued to the Press:¹

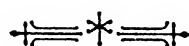
With conflict going on in so many states and major crisis development in others, it is a relief and a pleasure to think of those states where the Rulers have put themselves in line with their people and the spirit of the times and accepted the demand for Responsible Government.² We are told that this has been done in Hindol of Orissa and in the Benares State³ as well as in some others. Information is lacking as to the steps actually taken to bring about the change, and perhaps it is a little premature to rejoice. We have seen what has happened in Rajkot and after the victory seems assured. For strange influences are at work behind the scenes and the unfortunate Ruler is often a mere puppet in other's hands.

But in the case of Aundh there is no need to doubt or hesitate, for the deed is done. The Raja of Aundh deserves the fullest congratulations not only for the constitution he has inaugurated but for the graceful manner of doing it. There have been no mental reservations. Having decided on a course of action, he went ahead with confidence and lined himself with his people. I have not got this constitution before me but I understand that it makes Aundh a kind of federation of village republics. Aundh is a small State but it has done a big thing and set an example which, we hope, others will follow.

¹ See also *SWJN*, Vol. 9, p. 422. See *IAR*, 1939, Vol. I, p. 439.

² In the small state of Hindol certain concessions have been granted by the Raja Saheb in response to the petitions from the people of the State abolishing Bethi, Basan, Megan (forced gifts given at the time of royal ceremonies) and granting full civil liberties and facilities for people of the state to get wood from the forest without extra tax. The Raja had announced abolition of taxes on salt and kerosene. He declared the goal of his Government to be a full Provincial Government.

³ The ruler of Benares, Vibhuti Narayan Singh introduced progressive and constitutional reforms.



10. First Elected Assembly for Aundh Meets

Bombay Chronicle, 2 June 1939

Aundh
1 June 1939

The assurance that every rupee of the State revenue would be spent in the best interests of the State subjects was given by Prince Appa Saheb, the heir apparent and the first elected popular Premier of the State at the first inaugural session of the newly formed State Legislative Assembly held today.

Fifteen elected and five nominated members were present.

After the ceremony of swearing allegiance to the Raja Saheb and the people of Aundh was over, Sirdar Jagannath Maharaj Pandit, ex-member of the Council of State was elected as the Speaker.

The Raja Saheb in the course of his inaugural speech announced the new Cabinet, consisting of Prince Appa Saheb Pant, the Premier and Mr Amiruddin Qureshi of Atpadi as Minister.

Prince Appa Saheb acknowledging the responsibility of his new honour declared that it would be his duty to implement the expectation held regarding the new Constitution to the full. Every rupee of the State revenue would be present in the best interest of the people.

At the conclusion of the inauguration ceremony, town official Bills, namely the Bombay Sales Act and the Insurance Bill as applied to Aundh were adopted.

Before the session concluded the interim Budget for the period ending December 1939, containing sweeping reduction in the cost of administration and nearly four-fold increase of expenditure on village uplift, education and sanitation, was adopted.

11. Reforms in Aundh

Bombay Chronicle, 8 June 1939

8 June 1939

Important matters connected with further reforms in Aundh, it is understood, were discussed by Shrimant Appasaheb of Aundh with Mahatma Gandhi in the course of Tuesday and Wednesday at Birla House. One of these questions relates to a Bill embodying judicial reforms in the State which seems to have been drafted in consultation with Mahatma Gandhi.¹ The Bill is expected to be sponsored in the Aundh Assembly in August if public opinion is found to be in its favour. The Bill seeks to invest village Panchayats with powers to try civil and criminal cases with the help of the presiding State Judge. The object of the State authorities is to render justice as cheap and as speedy as possible and bring it to the door of the villager. There will be no court fee and pleaders will be completely eliminated.

Mahatma Gandhi's advice seems to have been sought in the matter of this judicial reform. The State authorities are now seeking the opinion of villagers to ascertain whether they consider this reform as beneficial.

Another matter on which Mahatma Gandhi's advice seems to have been sought is regarding credit system for the benefit of the poor agriculturist. According to the scheme drawn up, an agriculturist will be given loan for development of land, free of interest, in exchange for his cattle or grain or yarn in possession of the agriculturist. Besides this, there will be a co-operative store for

enabling the peasant to deal in his agricultural produce without being affected by fluctuations in the market.

¹ See *CWMG*, Vol. 68, p. 292.

12. Playing with Fire

Editorial, *Leader*, 15 April 1939

15 April 1939

The serious outburst of violent lawlessness at Ramdurg¹, resulting in eight policemen and warders being done to death and the ruler being compelled to seek safety for himself and his family in the British territory besides many other excesses and acts of incendiarism, is another grim reminder of the patent fact that some Congress leaders have been trying to ignore, viz., that it is easy enough to arouse the passions of the people but once they have been aroused it is not equally easy to keep them under control by exhortation to non-violence and that to launch schemes of direct action in India is to deliberately play with fire. The happenings at Ramdurg reveal a peculiarly tragic case of a ruler anxious to placate his people, being rewarded with more and more trouble. The troubles have now a history and even the version of Mahatma Gandhi and other Congress leaders would show that the Raja Saheb did his best to bring about a peaceful and amicable settlement and at no stage laid himself open to the charge of being obdurate or uncompromising. Gandhiji wrote an article in *Harijan* about the Ramdurg affairs just on the eve of his Rajkot fast and Mr Gangadharrao Deshpande,² an important Congress leader of Karnataka, has issued a statement after the last week's riot. And the two between them provide enough material to enable one to follow what has happened.

The trouble was agrarian in its origin. The Deccan States' People's Conference which met last year¹ at Sangli under the Presidentship of Sardar Patel appointed a committee to investigate and report on Ramdurg affairs. Mr Shankerrao Dev¹ on behalf of this committee and in collaboration with the Ramdurg Praja Sangh arrived at an agreement with the ruler who agreed to certain concessions which were announced at a Durbar attended, among others, by prominent Congressmen of Karnataka. Some members of the Praja Sangh were against the Agreement, but the Karnataka Provincial Congress Committee passed a resolution congratulating the ruler. Those dissatisfied with the agreement, however, continued to create trouble and Mr Gandhi was asked by Congressmen as to what they should do. The Mahatma replied through an article in the *Harijan* of March 4, from which we have taken the above facts and in which he said:

It appears that an attempt is now being made on behalf of the Ramdurg Praja Sangh to terrorise the ruler into making further concessions. He refrains from taking action against the mischief-mongers for fear of losing the Congress sympathy. The question I am asked is: 'What are the Congressmen involved in the settlement to do?' Assuming the correctness of my information, my unequivocal answer is that they have to keep at any cost the plighted word of the provincial committee.... If a representative Congressman breaks his word, the reputation of the whole Congress is at stake. How much more so if the provincial Congress Committee can't redeem its word.

We do not know what action was taken by the Congressmen to protect the ruler of Ramdurg from terrorization and to save the reputation of the Congress. But any action that they might have taken does not seem to have proved effective. For the troubles continued and grew worse till the state authorities felt compelled on 6th April to declare the Praja Sangh unlawful and arrest some

of its leaders. And this was followed within two days by scenes of mob violence accompanied with loss of life and incendiarism. That is how the Raja's patience in putting up with mischief-mongers and his anxiety to keep the Congress satisfied have been rewarded. Says Mr Gangadharrao Deshpande:

There was no provocation to justify such acts.

Legal measures taken by a state to keep peace and order are not to be answered with violence by any one, much less by Congressmen.... The Ramdurg authorities' patience and the Raja's solicitude to avoid friction was interpreted by the so-called leaders of the agitation as weakness. They forwarded extreme demands and refused to accept the recommendations of the land revenue reduction committee. Obstructions were put in the way of the collection of land revenue and a campaign of vilifying the authorities was kept up. The Ramdurg ruler is the first among the rulers of the Deccan states to accept popular demands and deserves legitimate protection and moral support from the public in general and the Congressmen in particular.

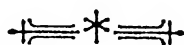
The Raja of Ramdurg, judging from the Congressite accounts, is a progressive ruler believing in conciliatory methods and has been anxious as well as ready to come to terms with Congress leaders and yet his state has been chosen to be the scene of so much political and agrarian turmoil culminating in a serious riot. They had tried to bring about reconciliation, but they found themselves helpless against their erstwhile followers. It is now for the police to find out the culprits and to bring them to book. But the moral for the Congress leaders and other agitators is plain enough. It is not safe to encourage people to put forward unreasonable demands, to arouse their passions and to teach them defiance of law and authority, however great the emphasis laid on the peaceful nature of the methods to be followed. For once the passions have been aroused and the respect for authority has disappeared, the leaders' counsels of patience, non-violence and even reasonable compromise are bound to be scattered to the winds. But will the leaders learn the lesson? We fear not. The extremist agitators are always inclined to fish in troubled waters. And the scramble for popularity among rivals for leadership prevents them from keeping the undesirable agitators in proper check.

¹ On 5th April police intervention to stop a national flag raising ceremony in Ramdurg touched off a three day orgy of assault, arson and looting in the course of which 8 Darbari officials died. Gandhi condemned it and the Karnataka PCC dissociated itself from the acts of violence by the mob at Ramdurg.

² Gangadhar Balkrishna Deshpande, 1871-1960; schooling in Belgaum, graduation from Deccan college, Poona; LLB from Bombay University in 1897; deeply influenced by Tilak; became Municipal Councillor at Belgaum, 1898-1914; organised picketing, political propaganda, conference; came to be known as 'Karnataka-Sinha' i.e. lion of Karnataka, conducted national papers like *Rashtramata*, 1907 and *Lokamanya*, 1920; President, Karnatak Provincial Congress Committee; member AICC and CWC; imprisoned in 1921, left politics after 1947.

³ The conference took place at Sangli on 22 May, 1938 presided over by Sardar Patel, who left Sangli on 22 but the conference continued under the presidentship of Shri Gangadharrao Deshpande.

⁴ Shankarrao Dattatraya Dev, b. 1894; Passed Matriculation in 1912 and joined Baroda College, Bombay; graduated in 1918; joined LLB, but abandoned it to join National Struggle; joined struggle in Champaran in 1919; imprisoned in 1923; President, Maharashtra Provincial Congress Committee, 1930; deeply influenced by Gandhi; successfully wrote books in Marathi and for papers like *Lokasangrah*, *Lokashakti* and *Swarajya*; imprisoned in 1940 and 1942; General Secretary of Congress from 1946-50.



13. The Ramdurg Disturbance

Independent India, 16 April 1939

16 April 1939

Very little authentic information is so far available regarding what actually took place at Ramdurg towards the end of the last week. Congress leaders, notably Shri Gangadharrao Deshpande, are already in the field showering curses on the unruly mob, condemning the acts of mob violence and appealing for support to and sympathy with the Ruler of Ramdurg as against the people of his State. We shall be behind none in expressing our disapproval of the acts of violence and our deep sympathy with the victims of violence whether they belonged to the ruler's side or to the popular side. It is reported that eight warders and policemen were killed. No news is available regarding casualties on the popular side. And there seems to be no anxiety to gather exact information on that point. The information so far available does not allow us to determine the exact sequence of events. But knowing as we do something of the Indian people and more particularly of the peasants it is hard for us to believe that an unarmed crowd of peasants would get so excited as to attack a jail and kill some policemen and warders without grave provocation. The guardians of law and order must have acted in a sufficiently tactless and provocative manner to lead the people to overstep the bounds of law and order. We do not plead it as a justification of the acts of violence but as explanation of an otherwise inexplicable incident. We regret the acts of violence as any one else, and more because they will furnish the authorities an easy handle for suppressing all movements and our leaders a convenient excuse for putting a ban on all movements in the States.

14. Gandhi and Popular Violence in Ramdurg

CWMG, Vol. No. 69, pp. 171-73

On Train to Bombay

24 April 1939

I have said not a word about Ramdurg up to now. I had a wire from Dr Hardikar¹ not to commit myself till I had heard from him. And Rajkumar² left me not a moment for any other work. I have only now on the train read the report prepared by Shri Diwakar,² Kaujalgi and Hardikar. I have also a revealing note from Shri Diwakar. I have studied Shri Gangadharrao Deshpande's note on the tragedy. I had a visit from Shri Munnavali, President of the Praja Sangh, and Shri Magadi. The report of Shri Diwakar, Kaujalgi and Hardikar is a dispassionate document and satisfactory in so far as it goes. This is its conclusion:

In the end we feel that the officers have acted tactlessly to a great extent and allowed the police to have their way. We believe that they could have controlled the situation if they had acted a little more patiently and put the workers of the Praja Sangh on their honour as they had done many a time. But though there was provocation, we do not think that it was so great as to arouse the brute in man and it must be laid at the door of the highly inflammable temper of the people. They seemed to have readily believed the rumours and got infuriated.

But there is absolutely no justification for any kind of violence even under the greatest provocation. In fact, the greater the provocation the greater is the opportunity and necessity for showing a non-violent spirit. That being our ideals we cannot defend the slightest violence under any circumstances. The events only show that the Praja Sangh had no control over the forces of violence which were hiding in the people. It is a matter for the deepest regret, and this tragedy is sure to act detrimentally against all popular movements in States. It is a clear warning to all

workers in the field and everyone must realise that before one feels sure that the people are rightly trained and disciplined in non-violence it is unwise to begin any great mass movement.

A study of the evidence before me leads me to the conclusion that whatever the provocation, the popular fury was wanton, cruel and deliberate. Over two thousand villagers had collected with the set purpose of wreaking vengeance. They were intent upon releasing the President and the other prisoners. Congressmen cannot escape blame for savagery of the people. The villagers were having the wrong lesson given to them. Ranpur in Orissa was the first finger-post. Ramdurg is the second. No one has denied the fact that the Raja Saheb of Ramdurg was a friend of the Congress. He deserved better treatment. I am not just now concerned with the truth or otherwise of the evidence on provocation. There are grave enough charges. But it has never been the Congress policy to plead provocation, howsoever grave, in justification of popular violence. We shall lose all if we play with this fundamental provision of the Congress. I had remarked before the Ramdurg outbreak that I smelt violence in the very air I was breathing. I am very sensitive to the slightest exhibition of violence or untruth. They are twins.

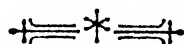
I am quite clear that the Provincial Congress Committee as well as the Working Committee when it is formed must take strong measures to purge the Congress ranks of violence in thought, word and deed. What little I read of the public Press shows that there is often a departure from truth and non-violence. How this evil can be remedied I do not know. The Press managed or owned by Congressmen might be amenable to moral control. I am, however, inclined to think that the greatest mischief is done by Congressmen working in the villages. It ought not to be difficult to bring these under rigid discipline.

I suggest an impartial enquiry into the events. The Karnataka Provincial Congress Committee should entrust it to a High Court Judge. If the Raja Saheb will help, the task will be easy. But even if he does not, there should be no difficulty in getting at the truth.

There is another untoward result of the Ramdurg movement. It has taken a communal turn. There are two parties, Brahmin and non-Brahmin. My own feeling has hitherto been that Karnataka had remained fairly free from the curse. But the cuttings and papers that have been sent to me show that the evil has gone deep enough to demand an immediate remedy. I have been asked to offer guidance in the matter. It would be presumptuous on my part to give any guidance without a proper study on the spot of the tension. I can only suggest that if there are enough Brahmins and non-Brahmins interested in removing the tension, they should tour the affected area, find out causes and deal with them. The tension is a symptom of the growing spirit of violence in the country.

¹ Dr Narayan Subrao Hardikar, b. 1889; primary education in Kannada and secondary in Poona; profoundly influenced by Lokmanya Tilak; proceeded to Calcutta to study medicine; went to America in 1913 and joined Michigan University; General Secretary of Indian Home Rule League of America, 1917 and Lajpat Rai was President; after return from America became Secretary, Karnataka Provincial Congress Committee; organised 'Hindustani Sevadai' in 1923; participated in all movements launched by Congress; in 1935 started the Karnataka Health Institute; elected member of Rajya Sabha in 1952.

² Ranga Rao Diwakar, b. 1894; education: Lamington High School at Hubli; studied for his degrees at Belgaum, Poona and Bombay; MA in English in 1918 and LL.B in 1919; appointed as Professor of English, but resigned in 1920; started Kannada weekly 'Karmaveera'; came into contact with Gandhi and participated in various movements launched by the Congress; arrested during Quit India and released in 1945; started newspaper called *Sanyukta Karnataka* in 1935; appointed as minister at New Delhi, 1948-52; member, Rajya Sabha, 1962-68; Chairman, Gandhi Smarak Nidhi and Gandhi National Memorial Trust.



15. The Ramdurg Tragedy

Independent India, 14 May 1939

14 May 1939

The popular side about the tragedy that was enacted at Ramdurg on 7th April has not yet come before the public. The speeches and writings of the Congress leaders created an impression that the outbreak of popular violence was absolutely unjustified and unwarranted. They tended to paint the Raja as a model ruler and his subjects as a mob of unreasonable and bloodthirsty ruffians. We had from the beginning a shrewd suspicion that these characterizations and impressions were born not out of a dispassionate study of facts but out of the horror at the disturbance of the *status quo*. Some information collected by a member of the Gandhi Seva Singh and also by Mr S.N. Angadi, the president of the Belgaum District Local Board has now seen the light of the day and throws a flood of light on the happenings leading to the tragedy of 7th April. From the information it appears that the people were goaded into the acts of violence by the provocative actions of the ruler and his officers. Apart from the excessive burden of taxation placed upon the people by the Raja since his advent to the Gaddi, there was no desire on his part even to implement the terms of the settlement brought about between him and the subject through the intervention of the Resident. The sequence of events from the 5th to the 7th also proves that the violence which broke out on the later date was the desperate reply of an exasperated people to the mal-treatment and merciless harassment to which they were subjected during the previous days. We write this not to justify the acts of violence but to plead for a proper approach to the situation created thereby. An approach which regards the people of Ramdurg as the only guilty party can never lead to a proper solution of the problem. We strongly disapprove the action of some of the eminent Congress leaders of Karnataka who in their misplaced zeal for the abstract principle of non-violence condemned the people and ranged themselves on the side of the Ruler, thereby condoning his acts of greater violence. It is such actions that alienate the people from the Congress and weaken its fighting strength.

XI MYSORE

1. The Mysore Congress

AISPC Papers, File No. 115(11), 1937-46, NMML

15-17 April 1939

Resolutions passed at the Second session of Mysore Congress held on 15th, 16th and 17th April 1939 at Viduranagar, Kolar District.

15 April 1939

This session of the Mysore Congress expresses its sense of deep sorrow at the deaths of innocent persons who were the victims of unjustified and indiscriminate shooting by the police at Viduraswatha last year.

This session of the Mysore Congress congratulates Shri H. Siddiah of Shimoga, a prominent Congressman and a member of the Working Committee, on his recent arrest under Section 124 A IPC.

This Congress notes with regret that the Government of Mysore after having violated both in spirit and in letter the terms of the agreement arrived at between them and the Congress through

the good offices of Shri Vallabhbhai Patel and Acharya Kripalani have reembarked upon a policy of repression to crush the legitimate and peaceful activities of the Mysore Congress for the achievement of Responsible Government as is evidenced by the recent arrest for Shri H. Siddiah on a charge of sedition and serving of an order under Section 39 of the Mysore Police Act on Congressmen in Chickballapur and Nelamangala Taluks and restoring them from carrying on peaceful picketing of liquor shops and while condemning the government for pursuing such a policy of repression, trusts that repression however vigorous it may become and whatever course it may take will instead of stifling the movement for Civil Liberties and Responsible Government in the State only serves to intensify the same and ensure a quicker realisation of the objective of the Mysore Congress and calls upon the country to be prepared for all suffering and sacrifice strictly adhering to the principle of truth and non-violence.

16 April 1939

This session of the Mysore Congress makes it clear beyond all doubt that the people of Mysore demand and are determined upon the immediate establishment of full Responsible Government in the State under the aegis of HH the Maharaja of Mysore and that all attempts at imposing on the country any constitution falling short of the demand will be resisted by the Congress with all its strength adhering strictly to the principles of truth and non-violence.

The session authorizes the All Mysore Congress Committee to take such action as and when necessary in the matter of implementing the said demand.

This session meanwhile calls upon all Congress workers in the State to carry on constructive work such as (1) formation of committees, (2) enrollment of members, (3) propaganda encouraging khadi and other cottage and village industries, communal unity, removal of untouchability, prohibition including peaceful picketing etc. on an intense scale throughout the country and educating and training the people further in the technique of non-violence.

The Mysore Congress feels greatly encouraged by the fact that Mahatma Gandhi has taken upon himself to guide the movement for freedom in the Indian States and feels assured that under his guidance Responsible Government in the Indian States will be established before long, thereby facilitating the emergence of an Independent India.

This session of the Mysore Congress congratulates all the Congressmen and others who have resigned their membership of the Reforms Committee, Legislative Council, Representative Assembly and local bodies in accordance with the resolution of the AMCC. The Congress, however, regrets to note that some Congressmen have not as yet resigned their membership on these bodies and hereby authorizes the Working Committee to take such steps as may be necessary on such members in this connection to enforce discipline in the Congress.

17 April 1939

This session of the Mysore Congress condemns the action of the Government in associating the new Central Police Station buildings in Mysore city with the name of Dr F.A. Hamilton, an unpopular officer in the State, and in not removing the name in spite of overwhelming public protest against such action and in direct contravention of their own declared policy.

This session congratulates all those persons who have suffered and sacrificed in the 'Hamilton Building Satyagraha'. This session is further of opinion that the Satyagraha has served its purpose of effectively demonstrating the volume of public opposition in the matter and while appreciating the suspension of the Satyagraha by Shri Tagadur Ramachandra Rao regrets that in spite of such suspension the Government have not yet thought fit to release the prisoners undergoing imprisonment in connection therewith.

This session views with concern the undertaking of a 21 day fast by Shri Tagadur Ramachandra Rao and requests him to give up the same.

This Congress notes with deep concern that the seasonal conditions in many parts of the State have been very unfavourable in the current year resulting in great hardship to the Ryots and urges upon the Government to grant necessary relief immediately by way of (i) reduction of land revenue, (ii) providing prompt credit at low rates of interest, (iii) starting relief works, (iv) free distribution of seed, (v) providing free grazing facilities and in all other ways. This Congress calls upon all Congress Committees and Congressmen to study the local conditions and strive for the removal of the grievances.

The Mysore Congress while it holds that a federation for India, including the Indian States is the only possible and acceptable form of Government, states that its attitude towards the federation adumbrated in the Government of India Act of 1935 is the same as that of the Indian National Congress and declares that the people of Mysore are prepared to participate in any struggle that may be inaugurated by the Indian National Congress in the event of the imposition of such a federation in India by the Imperial power.

This Congress declares that it is opposed in any event to Mysore joining the Federation unless and until full responsible Government is established in the State and her representatives to the Federal Legislative are returned by election.

This Congress holds that the achievement of a free and responsible system of government is absolutely necessary for the amelioration of the conditions of the people and declares that the following are some of the important measures to be carried out under a system of Responsible Government in Mysore:

1. Devising a just system of taxation and the reordering of public Expenditure in an equitable manner.
2. Suitable reduction of land Revenue including the Cesses thereon and the Panchayat holdings.
3. Adoption of policy of 'Prohibition'.
4. Improvement of Agriculture by all possible means and the revival of dead or dying Cottage Industries and also the promotion of basic Industries.
5. Reform of the Forest Policy with a view to protect the rural population from improper and profitless levies and vexatious restrictions.
6. Declaration of moratorium wherever necessary, the scaling down of debts on a just basis and revising of a satisfactory method to liquidate such debts and providing necessary credit facilities at cheap rates of interest.
7. Fixing Rs 500 as the maximum salary for any Government servant and also economizing the cost of administration consistent with efficiency.
8. Providing for compulsory primary education and liquidation of adult illiteracy throughout the administration.
9. Eradication of corruption in all branches of the administration.
10. Provision of facilities in the villages in the matter of:
 - (i) Public Health and Sanitation.
 - (ii) Medical relief.
 - (iii) Protected water supply.
 - (iv) Lighting.
 - (v) Communication.
 - (vi) Posts & Telegraphs.
 - (vii) Recreation, etc.

11. Enacting labour Legislation on proper lines, ensuring a minimum living wage for labourers, and giving freedom to organise Trade Union.
12. Creation of autonomous Village Panchayats with wide powers and adequate finance.

This Congress further declares that the policies and programmes of the Indian National Congress in regard to above and other congener matters are in general identical with those of the Mysore Congress.

This session of the Mysore Congress recognizing the need for making such changes in the Constitution of the Mysore Congress as may be necessary and desirable in the light of the experience gained by the working of the same during the past one year hereby appoints a sub-committee consisting of T. Mariappa, M. Shankriah, S. Vasudeva Rao, K. Pattabahi Ramaiya and V.S. Narayana Rao as Convenor for the above purpose. Further this session authorizes the AMCC to consider and give effect to the report to be submitted by the sub-committee.

2. Repression in Mysore

Editorial, *Bombay Chronicle*, 3 May 1939

3 May 1939

The situation in Mysore, even apart from the firing tragedy¹, is getting from bad to worse, thanks, on the one hand, to the Government's repressive policy and, on the other, to the people's determination to oppose it. About 75 persons have been already imprisoned for more or less technical offences and a number of others have been ordered not to take part in meetings or orders are daily being served on Congress leaders and workers, fresh arrests also are being made daily, and the only three daily papers in the State have not been suppressed. Only the pure blind would deny the existence of repression in Mysore. So far as the firing tragedy is concerned, the Government are reported to be about to institute an inquiry into it. The terms of inquiry are still unknown but they will be necessarily limited to the immediate circumstances that lead to firing. They will not permit a discussion of the general policy of repression. The findings of the inquiry committee, if impartial and convincing, may prevent violent clashes in future but may not have any other effect on the prevalent repression in the State.

Many are now discussing the question of ultimate responsibility for the firing and they answer it according to their own political predilection. Some hold the Congress and Gandhiji responsible on the plea that by example and precept they have taught people to resist established authority. Congress and Gandhiji are certainly responsible, partly for teaching one and all to resist injustice and other similar evils. But that teaching, which is centuries old, would have come in any case from some source or other. Gandhiji and, through him, the Congress are striving to make the inevitable resistances as non violent as is possible. They do not regret such teaching. They are proud of it. Thinking men all the world over are grateful to Gandhiji for the gospel of non-violence, resistance of evil as it tends to lessen evil and promote peace. If some of his followers betray violent tendencies occasionally, it means not that the teaching is wrong, but that the teaching takes time to be effective. Thus Congress and Gandhiji are certainly responsible for much of the political conflict all over India in the sense indicated above but they are not responsible in the sense of deserving blame for their teaching. Some other critics hold Congress and Gandhiji somewhat responsible for the repression in Mysore because of their resolution enjoining an intervention in States. Now we have often pointed out that resolution is far from perfect and that it would have been better if it had permitted intervention in some exceptional cases. But the resolution has one great merit in it, that it stimulates self reliance and a strong sense of responsibility among State

workers in undertaking hazardous tasks. Congress leaders in Mysore in particular seems to appreciate this point of view fully and to make it a point of honour to carry on their struggle against repression wholly on their own responsibility and with their own resources in men and money. Yet, as certain features of the Mysore struggle are of exceptional interests, it behoves the Congress Working Committee to see, on the one hand, how it can give maximum moral support to the Mysore Congressmen under the existing resolution and how on the other, it should attempt to improve the resolution itself in the light of experience in Mysore and other states.

¹ This refers to the firing at Viduswatha village in Kolar district on 25 April, 1938. A crowd of 10,000 had gathered to hear the Congressmen, but the district officials had prohibited this meeting. The police party of 26 fired more than 100 rounds into the multitude, killing at least 30 and wounding many more.

3. Reforms in Mysore

Editorial, *Bombay Chronicle*, 24 May 1939

The recommendations of the Mysore Reforms Committee are being anxiously awaited by the whole country as they are sure to have their repercussions on other States, large or small. The Committee is understood to have formulated its more or less final proposals and to be busy writing its report to be submitted to the Government in about a month. But a forecast of the recommendations has appeared in several papers and as the different versions substantially agree with one another they may be presumed to agree likewise with the actual proposals of the Committee. We feel it necessary to say a few words about the proposals before it is too late to mend them because they call for considerable mending. So far as the goal of Reforms is concerned, the Committee has done well to define it definitely as 'the establishment of a system of Responsible Government in Mysore under the authority and protection of His Highness the Maharaja.'¹ And the Committee rightly, insists that this goal should be unequivocally accepted by the Government and 'specifically mentioned' in the new constitution. If this fundamental demand of the Committee, which is also the demand of the State people is not unreservedly accepted by the Government there can be no peace in the State.

As regards the immediate advance towards the goal, the Committee's reported proposals are extremely disappointing and do not even guarantee the attainment of the goal in any specified number of years. It is true that they provide for the extension of the franchise, an increase in the size of both Houses of Legislature and a reduction in the number of nominated members. But the powers of the Legislature are but slightly increased and it has utterly inadequate control over the Executive. The Executive of the Government will be carried on, according to the new proposals, by a Dewan and a cabinet of not less than four Ministers to be appointed by the Ruler. Not less than two of the Ministers are to be non-officials selected at the pleasure of the Ruler from amongst the elected members of the Representative Assembly or the Legislative Council, one at least from each body, the rest being appointed at the pleasure of His Highness from among the officials or non-officials, whether members of the Assembly or Council or otherwise. While the term of office of the non-official Minister will be co-terminus with that of the Houses, the official Ministers will hold office during the pleasure of His Highness. The most disappointing feature of the Executive is that no provision is made for the passing of a vote of no-confidence against individual Ministers or against the Ministry in general. In the absence of such a provision, the Legislature's control over even the non-official Ministers is illusory. And the whole system, which has all the well-known defects of dyarchy is hardly a real approach towards complete responsibility.

Unless the reported proposals are radically improved they will not be acceptable to the State Congress or any large section of the State people. The people are no strangers to the working of self-governing institutions. They are about as well trained in it as the people of any province in India. The least they expect immediately is the measure of Responsible Government that now obtains in the Provinces, with a guarantee that full Responsible Government will be inaugurated in a reasonably short period. The people in the other States look up to Mysore to give a good lead in this direction. They will be bitterly disappointed if that lead is not given, the disappointment in Mysore itself being necessarily most keen. Even if the Committee's final recommendations turn out to be as disappointing as they are reported to be, the Government will be well advised to go a great deal farther to placate the people. The State Congress should be ready to take suitable action if the people's opinion is flouted by the Government.

¹ Maharaja Krishnarajendra Wodeyar Bahadur; succeeded to throne in 1902; 1913, the instrument of Transfer was replaced by a treaty which indicates more approximately the relations between the British Government and estate of Mysore; ruled upto 1940

4. Mysore leaders meet Jawaharlal

Bombay Chronicle, 19 June 1939

Bombay

What may be described as a via media between two alternatives at the disposal of State subjects, namely, mass civil disobedience and mild acceptance of reforms of an unsatisfactory nature that may be granted to them, it is understood, was suggested by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru to the Mysore State Congress delegation which saw him today. He suggested that if the reforms were found unsatisfactory, it was certainly the duty of the people not only to reject them but also carry on a campaign against them which may not necessarily amount to mass civil disobedience. The agitation should have, as its ultimate objective, full Responsible Government.

If in the course of this movement, any of the leaders were to be arrested or other kinds of restrictions were to be imposed, the States people should face such hardships cheerfully. Such agitation, conducted on proper lines, may prepare the ground and eventually lead to a mass struggle on the part of the subjects.

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, it is understood, explained that if the reforms granted were worth nothing, there was no question of a compromise with them as there was no such thing as compromising with an evil. That the States people should, under no circumstances, lower the pitch of their demand for full Responsible Government was the opinion of Pandit Nehru.

Another point on which Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru laid emphasis was the need on the part of States subjects to keep an eye on the world situation because in the present world, no one could be in sweet isolation, whether it was an Indian State or a part of British India.

The delegationists, it is understood, humorously replied to Pandit, 'If we keep our eyes on you, it is as good as keeping them on the world situation.'

Questioned about his views regarding the forecast of reforms in Mysore, Pandit Nehru said that he had not had the opportunity of studying them. He requested the delegationists to send him a copy of the forecast.

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru expressed the opinion that if the reforms in the States gave something corresponding to the Provincial Autonomy, it might be difficult for the States people to offer wholesale resistance to them on the plea that the reforms did not amount to full Responsible

Government. But at the same time, it would be necessary for the States people to continue to clamour for fulfillment of their legitimate demand for full Responsible Government.

Pandit Nehru expressed agreement with Mahatma Gandhi that so far as that immediate step in Mysore was concerned, the Mysore people themselves should be the sole judges as they were in the know of full facts regarding the situation in the state.

The delegationists also had a talk with Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel earlier in the day. The talks were inconclusive and will be resumed on Monday morning.

5. What Sardar told Mysore Deputation

Bombay Chronicle, 20 June 1939

Bombay
20 June 1939

The advice that they should make one more approach to the Mysore State authorities with their demand for full Responsible Government before taking a final step, even though they might be sure that their approach might meet with no response from the State, was given by Sardar Patel to the Mysore State Congress Deputation which concluded its interviews with the Sardar today and left for Bangalore by the Madras Express.

Sardar Patel emphasized that whatever action they took, it must be taken on their own responsibility as they were the sole judges of the situation. But he urged them not to make any personal reference or attacks in any shape or form against the Maharaja or the Diwan,¹ even if they resumed their struggle.

The Deputation consisted of Messrs. H.C. Dassappa,² K. Changalraya Reddy³ and Siddalingappa. The deputationists issued the following statement before their departure:

'The Mysore State Congress Delegation met Sardar Patel again at his residence and acquainted him with the substance of their interview with Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. The Deputation had three long interviews with Sardar Patel during the last two or three days in the course of which they explained to him the series of events that had taken place in the State since the time of settlement leading upto the last resolution of the Mysore Congress Committee which stated that the people of Mysore were not only ready, but anxious for the resumption of the struggle for Responsible Government which, in its opinion, had become inevitable.

The Sardar after giving them a patient hearing advised them to make one more approach to the State with their demand before taking a final step, even though they might be sure that their approach might meet with no response from the State. If they felt that the Reforms were unsatisfactory and unacceptable he said they were bound to reject them. He informed them that the Princes of India were in no mood today to make any real advance or part with any real powers as he saw no chance for the State subjects anywhere to secure the substances even after tremendous sacrifice and sufferings.

If they felt sure that the Mysore people were ready for such a struggle and an unwanted reactionary scheme was sought to be imposed upon them it would be upto them to resist it with all their might, no matter what the cost might be. They were the sole judges of the situation and they must take the entire responsibility for such a decision. Sardar Patel advised them to make sure that no Congressman in Mysore made any personal reference or attacks in any shape or form on the Maharaja or the Diwan in case they resumed the struggle.'

¹ Mirza M. Ismail, b. 1883, educ: The Royal School at Mysore; Central College Bangalore; Superintendent of Police, 1905; Asst. Secretary to HH the Maharaja, 1908; Private Secretary, 1922; Diwan of Mysore, 1926; invited to Round Table Conference and delegate of South Indian States.

⁴ H.C. Dassappa, a lawver and prominent freedom fighter of Mysore; married to Vashodharamma, daughter of K.K. Ramaiah. President Mysore Congress in 1926; participated at Shivpur in 1937; President, Mysore Congress, 1939.

¹ Changanrava Reddy, BA, BL; Secretary Mysore Congress, 1939.

6. Mysore Congress Policy: Leader's Statement

Times of India, 23 June 1939

Bangalore
23 June 1939

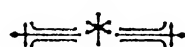
Mr H.C. Dassappa, President, Mysore Congress, who returned here after interviewing Mr Gandhi, Mr Patel and Pandit Nehru, has issued a statement, correcting certain statements that have appeared in a section of the Press regarding interviews which Mysore Congress Delegation had with Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Mr Patel. The statement says:

'The trend of opinion of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Mr Patel was that Mysore Congressmen should be the sole judges of the circumstances in Mysore and the line of action to be pursued in the light of those circumstances. It is surprising that a section of the public and the Press should have stated that the leaders had said that there should be no struggle or mass civil disobedience and that everything should be settled by negotiation and whatever reforms were given should be accepted.

Nothing of the kind was said. What Pandit Nehru said was that it was wrong to think that there were only two alternatives, namely unconditional acceptance of whatever reforms were given or mass civil disobedience. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru was of the opinion that between those two alternatives there was scope for a declaration of non-acceptance of the reforms if unsatisfactory and the carrying on of an intensive agitation which if strong would develop into a mass struggle later, either as the result of the offensive of Government or by the inherent strength of the movement. Constitutional agitation could give the way to a mass struggle. This does not mean that he was against mass civil disobedience.

The report that Pandit Nehru advised the acceptance of reforms if they approximated to Provincial Autonomy in British India Provinces is not quite correct. While discussing the prospect of resistance to the introduction of reforms falling short of the people's demand, Pandit Nehru said that it would be difficult to offer resistance in case the reforms approximated to Provincial Autonomy. He envisaged in such an eventuality the idea of working the same with a view to realizing full Responsible Government as in British India.'

The Statement adds: What Mr Patel said makes the point clear. Mr Patel no doubt advised the Mysore Congress to make one more approach to the Durbar with their demands before taking the final step, even though they might be sure that their approach would have no response. Mr Patel's opinion that the Princes in India were in no mood today to make over real power to their subjects without a fierce struggle, involving tremendous sacrifice and suffering, is unequivocal, and worth noting. Mr Patel also stated that it would be up to the Mysore Congress to resist an unwanted and reactionary scheme of reform The only condition was the people's readiness for a such a struggle. In regard to that both Mr Gandhi and Mr Patel had stated that Mysoreans were the sole judges and none would be more glad than Mr Gandhi if the Mysore Congress decides to launch a non-violent struggle and succeeds.



7. On the Role of Congress Ministers: K. Hanumanthaiya¹
to Vallabhbhai Patel, President, All India Parliamentary
Sub-Committee, 5 August 1939

B.G. Kher Papers, File No. 6, NMML

Bangalore City
5 August 1939

Sir,

At a meeting of the executive committee of the Bangalore District Congress Committee, held on 29th ultimo, the conduct and pronouncements of some of the Congress Ministers and leaders of British India, who visit Mysore State, came up for discussion and after a good deal of discussion the committee authorized me, its President, to write to you in the matter before expressing its opinion through a resolution.

A number of Congress ministers and leaders of British India visit Mysore State now and then. Some of them are entertained by the Government as State guests and housed in palatial buildings. The Government incurs an annual expenditure of over a lakh of rupees from the General Revenues for the purpose. The revised estimate of 1937-38 was Rs 1,12,100.

Some of these Congressmen visit a few beauty spots and chosen centers of Government activities, as are shown to them by the State officials, and then come out with statements and interviews lavishing their praise on the administration and on individuals. One would expect of these Congressmen to make judicious statements, if at all, and not statements which are half-truths, and perversions of truth and full exaggeration and flattery. Besides, one would also expect of them, as they are themselves soldiers in freedom's fight, to know what consequences, direct or indirect, of their conduct and pronouncements, with the fond hope that they will one day be pleased to see that their duty lies in encouraging—to the best of their abilities—Freedom movement in the State, instead of keeping themselves away from it, and what is more, instead of glorifying the state administration and individuals who try to crush it. That hope seems to be doomed to disappointment. I do not want to try your patience with all the instances of the kind in question. I will here cite only two instances.

You are aware the Mysore Congress has thought it fit to withdraw its members from the State Legislatures and local bodies, thus depriving them of their moral support. During that last session of the Representative Assembly, the Congress members were not there as they had resigned. Srijit C. Rajagopalachari, for the first time in the history of the Assembly, came and sat on its dais by the side of its president lending his moral support to the Congress-forsaken Assembly. Interested Press and propaganda agents of the Government at once flashed photographs and news of the event, all with a view to show to the world that the Assembly is none the worse for the resignations of the Mysore Congress members. People here interpret that Srijit C. Rajagopalachari's conduct in coming down from the Ooty heights to grace the dais of the Assembly did not do any service to the Freedom movement here, but did a good turn to the administration and individuals who are decrying it and who are trying their best to crush it.

I do not want to dilate here on the number of times he honours the State as state guest and his scrupulous avoidance of local Congressmen. I would ask him; how he would feel if, say Srijit G.B. Pant comes to Madras, stays with Srijit Ramaswamy Naiker as his guest, and then sits by his side in a public meeting at the beach.

Sjt B.G. Kher came here a few days back and stayed as state guest. When approached by local Congressmen he said that he had come here purely for reasons of health. The state officials, as

usual, took him round the state to see beauty spots and selected centers of Government activities, and then Sjt Kher made statements, copies of which are attached hereunto.

During the period of Sjt Kher's stays as state guest, the political movement in the State was passing through an important phase. In accordance with your advice, the president of the Mysore Congress sought interview with the Dewan. You are aware of the Dewan's two negative answers, which however, did not make an affirmative, notwithstanding Sjt Kher's fulsome flattery of the Dewan's high order of statesmanship. In that psychological atmosphere of seeking and refusing of interviews, who benefitted out of Sjt Kher's statements, one can easily see. I would ask Sjt Kher how he would feel if, at about the time of the inauguration of prohibition. Dr Khan Saheb came to Bombay, stayed with Sir Cawasji Jahangir as his guest, and issued a statement to the press extolling Sir Cawasji in the language employed by Sjt Kher in the statement in question.

It is our misfortune that we who are struggling against odds should be served in this fashion by some Congress leaders. In Mysore State there are about 56,000 primary members of the Congress, and a proportionate number on the KPCC and AICC. That Sjt C. Rajagopalachari, Sjt Kher and other leaders of the Congress should be completely disregardful of the feelings of us all, and should only help, in their own way, the autocracy, pomp and pageantry of the administration and the individuals that sustain it, is a very disquieting factor. It is not conducive to the internal harmony of the great organisation to which all of us owe allegiance.

I am one of those who gave faith in Mahatmaji's leadership, and as such, I am anxious to know why we do not deserve the goodwill of Sjt C. Rajagopalachari and Sjt B.G. Kher. I can only plead with you earnestly that we are willing to put into practice any advice which will draw us closer to these leaders. I hope that you will be pleased to advise us to what we should do in the matter.

With respectful regards,

I remain your follower,

PS: I would request you to place before Gandhiji this matter, if possible.

¹ K. Hanumanthaiya, b 1908, educ graduated in 1930 from the Maharaja's college, University of Mysore; Law degree from Law college, Poona, 1932; Secretary, Harijan Sevak Sangh, Bangalore, 1933, President, Hindi Prachakra Sabha, Bangalore city, 1934, President, Bangalore District Congress Committee, 1936-46, elected to the Mysore Representative Assembly, 1940; Leader of the Congress in Assembly, 1944-49; President, Mysore Pradesh Congress Committee in 1950, member, Mysore Legislative Assembly, 1957-62

8 Vasappa Gopi's¹ Appeal to Congressmen

AICC Papers, File No. G-12, 1937-39, NMML. See also *Bombay Chronicle*, 10, 13 September 1939

5 September 1939

My dear Countrymen,

'The responsibility of the Dictatorship of the Mysore Congress has fallen on my frail shoulders. I appeal to all my Congress friends to extend their hearty support in the due discharge of my duties.

The Government of Mysore have changed their tactics. The volunteers who defied the prohibitory order at Robertson pet were not given adequate food. They were not produced in the court before the Magistrate. They were taken in lorry to a distance of 70 to 80 miles and left on the roadside at dead of night at spots 5 to 6 miles from the nearest village.² The country must vigorously protest against those inhuman methods that do credit to no civilized Government. The British

Government tried these methods in British India and failed. And the Mysore Government will shortly come to know that their methods also will fail.

As a protest against these inhuman methods of the Government I have decided to lead a large batch of volunteers to Robertson pet myself.

I appeal to all Congressmen to start prohibition including picketing in all places in the State and to carry on the movement vigorously. I further appeal to them to be perfectly non-violent under the gravest of provocations'.

¹ Vasappa, who succeeded T. Siddalingaiya, first dictator of the Mysore Congress, and H. Hanumanthaiya, President of the Bangalore District Committee, both were sentenced to 3 months imprisonment.

⁴ The satyagrahis walked through a thick forest to reach Chintamani, where they received a grand reception.

9. Report on the situation in Mysore: To Jawaharlal Nehru, 17 September 1939

AISPC Papers, File No. 13, Group No. 1, NMML

President: H.C. Dassappa, BA, BL

Secretary: K. Chengalraya Reddy, BA, BL

Treasurer: S. Channiah

Dear Sir,

I hope you are in receipt of the letter written by Shri R. Raghav Reddy, III Dictator, Mysore Congress on the 8th inst.

Shri Mudligiri Gowda of Tumkur, an Ex-member of the Mysore Representative Assembly who resigned his membership in the Assembly in pursuance of the All Mysore Congress Committee resolution, was has broken prohibitory order at Tumkur when nearly 6,000 people attended that procession and meeting. He was not arrested.

On 14 October 1939 he defied the prohibitory order Section 144 at Mysore. There was a big procession in Mysore terminating in a big meeting attended by nearly 7 to 8 thousand people in the prohibited *Maidan*. He was arrested on 15 October 1939 at Mysore and convicted to 4 months RI and a fine of Rs 200 or one month RI in default. Shri Kenchappa of Arakere, Seringapatam Taluk, who disobeyed the order along with the IV Dictator, was sentenced to 3 months RI and Rs 50 fine or one month RI in default.

I have been nominated by the IV Dictator as his successor. I have so far visited 5 district Headquarters, Shimoga, Chitaldoorg, Chickinogalur, Tumkur and Bangalore. In all the places, I addressed public meetings and workers' meetings. I am glad to inform you that everywhere the people are very enthusiastic. But the Government is very cautious in effecting arrests, as is evident in their not arresting the IV Dictator at Tumkur even when he broke the prohibitory order.

Directions have been issued that 18 September 1939 should be observed as the KGF Day and 1 October 1939 as the Responsible Government Day.

The satyagraha at the KGF is proceeding with vigour. The Government tried to leave the satyagrahis at various places 70 to 80 miles distant from the Kolar Gold Fields. Every satyagrahi so left returned without fail to defy the order for the second time. About 80 satyagrahis who defied the order for the second time have been sentenced to a fine of Rs 25 or 7 days imprisonment in default. To collect fine imposed upon the satyagrahis, the Government is attaching the moveable properties belonging to these people and thereby creating havoc in rural parts. Information has

reached this office that the police are unnecessarily harassing the people at Melur, Sidlaghatta Taluk and Chickballapur. The local Congress Committee President Melur, Sidlaghatta Taluk, writes under the date 16 October 1939 that the police beat the people indiscriminately with lathis yesterday evening. I must say that the repression is in full swing. The police have even gone to extent of attacking the ornaments of ladies, food-stuffs etc. However, I am glad to inform you that the people are strictly non-violent and peaceful. Till now 200 volunteers have defied the prohibitory orders at KGF. It is proposed to send a batch of 100 satyagrahis from Bangalore to the KGF, a distance of 50 miles on foot. They will start on the 19th inst.

Total arrests in the State so far are 279.

Total convictions 110.

The movement is gaining ground from day to day. All the districts demanded permission for the programme of cutting the toddy trees. The same programme has been permitted in 3 districts in the first instance. Chitaldroog District will commence the programme on the 18th inst.

I am today proceeding to Mysore for defying the prohibitory order at Mysore. I hope I have your blessings.

Thanking you,

Yours sincerely,
V Dictator

10. The Mysore Struggle: Submitted to the Standing Committee of the States People's Conference by the Mysore Congress Working Committee

AISPC Papers, Mysore (Satyagraha), File No. 115(1), NMML

Bangalore
4 October 1939

The history of the first Satyagraha Movement which was brought to an end through the intervention of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and Acharya Kripalani need not be narrated here. The seeds of present Satyagraha Movement can be traced from the date from which the Mysore Government commenced disrespecting the pact.

The famous pact!

In the early part of 1938, a pact was arrived at between Mysore Government and the Congress through the intervention of Sardar Patel and Acharya Kripalani. Before the leaders turned their backs towards Mysore, the pact was broken by Mysore Government. The orders of deportation passed against the Mysore Congressmen on the plea that they were not Mysoreans (in fact they are domiciled Mysoreans living in Mysore for over 10 years) were not withdrawn in spite of Sardar's larger clarification that deportation orders were not included in the pact. The Government began to interpret the term 'order of deportation' as not meaning 'prohibitory orders' because this was the word put in the agreement. But another act of the Government clearly showed that they were out for breaking the pact. The prohibitory order passed during this time in Mysore under Sec. 144 CrPC forbidding the public from holding any meeting on Town Hall Maidan in Mysore was not only not withdrawn in spite of repeated requests for withdrawal of the same but renewed after expiration of 6 months and that renewal is being continued till today. Even though that Government broke the pact by their acts cited above, the Congress scrupulously observed every term.

How it was Honoured!

The death blow was given to the pact when Government refused to take another nominee of Congress on the Reforms Committee to one of the 7 seats allotted to Congress. One Sri Bhupalan Chandrashekhar Setty resigned his membership of the Mysore Congress. The Congress naturally wanted to fill that seat by a member of its own in whom they had confidence. The Government refused to take the nominee on the Committee without assigning any reason for the same (it may be noted here that the Congress was free to nominate its own members according to the pact). The Congress felt that it could no longer pocket all disregards hurled at the pact so solemnly made before the All India leaders; the Congress took care not to deviate even to the slightest extent from the condition imposed on it and wanted only to show its protest against Government's breaking of the pact by withdrawing all its members from the Reforms Committee. Here it is necessary to clarify that the attitude of the Congress was one of conciliation and not of aggression. The Government accepted the withdrawal without any hesitation and later made that alarming Statement on 17 July 1939 on the floor of the Legislative Council that there was no pact between Mysore Congress and the Government. Moreover the Congress was further disgraced by our Dewan Saheb, saying that the very word 'Pact' was offensive to him. This denial of the pact was such a naked lie that it drew forth the following remarks by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the President of States' People's Conference:—

'This denial is significant of the new mentality in the State. The agreement of the May 1938 confirmed by a resolution of the Indian National Congress Working Committee dated May 16, 1938 embodied a settlement, and so far the Dewan has been vigorously asserting that he has not been guilty of any breach of that settlement at all and if the Dewan has his will, the last year and more must be scratched out of the pages of history...'

The Second Phase

Had the pact been honoured in word and spirit by the Mysore Government, perhaps there would have been no necessity of starting the second Satyagraha campaign. The second phase of the history of Mysore Satyagraha is directly connected with and in fact is in pursuance of Mahatma Gandhiji's new technique regarding the States fight. Sir Mirza, the head of our Government, professes to be an ardent follower of Mahatmaj and a subscriber of *Harijan* ever since its inception. When Gandhiji's Statement was fresh in his mind and even Shri Virawala of Rajkot was prepared to have personal negotiations with States organisation, in a meeting held at Arsikere, the Mysore Congress decided to come to a understanding with the Government regarding the future relations between the Government and the Congress through personal interviews. The Congress permitted the President to negotiate with the Dewan retaining its ideal of immediate establishment of Full Responsible Government in the State in view. The interview was sought and the same was refused. A second request was made by the president for reconsideration and it received no better luck. The Congress deplored the situation and gave the Government full one month to reconsider its decision. The Government on the other hand went on adding its own nominees to the Reforms Committee. Meanwhile, an authenticated forecast of the reforms recommended by the said Committee appeared in all the leading papers in and outside the State and the same was not contradicted by the Government. They were anything but satisfactory. One of the later nominee of Government, a retired high official of the Government is said to have sent dissent note stating that no change was necessary in the present administration.

Government Tactics

Taking advantage of our silence and inactivity, the Government began to use its tact and influence to bring disruption in our camp. Several tactics which would be out of place to narrate here were successfully adopted. The Congress consciously felt that the only way left open for it to achieve its objective of the establishment of full Responsible Government within the State was through suffering and sacrifice on the basis of truth and non-violence as its creed. Hence the issue resolved itself to this that we should attain our goal not by desiring but by deserving while leaving open the door of negotiation till 1st September 1939. The entire batch of the Mysore Congress Working Committee, in pursuance of the resolution of the Working Committee passed at Arasikere conjointly, started on an All Mysore tour to carry out its constructive activities and also to know the mind of the people of the State by personal contact. This body of responsible men was specially selected to tour because the Congress knew that the government was out to misinterpret the slightest act of the member of the touring party to their advantage and damn the Congress Organisation. By then, two of the Working Committee members had been clapped in under the plea of making seditious speeches though no sane legal head can conceive the slightest sedition in them. They were sentenced to long terms of rigorous imprisonment and heavy fines. Before the substantive part of the sentence expired the car of one of them was seized and fine of Rs 500 was recovered. The tour of the Congress Working Committee members first commenced in Chitaldurg District and a ban was placed on them not to go in procession in Challakere town. The touring party was not out for pomp, but for work. Hence it pocketed the insult and proceeded further. After finishing its tour of another District when the party wanted to enter the limits of Kolar Gold Fields to study the labour condition there, they were prohibited not to enter that area consisting of about 22 villages, but also to leave the place within 24 hours. Before the party decided its future plan of action and even before the prescribed 24 hours, as was required by the Government Rules themselves, expired, the whole party was arrested and they were immediately tried and sentenced to different terms of RI and fined on 18 August 1939. This act of the Government was condemned and the legality of which was criticised by the '*Hindu*' Madras. With all that the Congress waited patiently till the 1 September 1939; the date kept open for negotiation. It is with painful anguish that we have to state here that our Govt. which is considered to be the most Responsive never responded to our prayer. Now we leave to any one who goes through the above narration of facts to say whether we invited the fight or the Government was the cause for the same.

The main issue

Hence the issue before the Congress on 1 September 1939 was whether the time was ripe for starting our struggle for the achievement of our goal namely, achievement of full Responsible Government in the State. It may be also stated here, that the present struggle is not as a protest against the breaking of the pact or against several prohibitory orders or against the imprisonment of our leaders. The issue was the establishment of full Responsible Government under that aegis of the Maharaja of Mysore and not to stop our struggle until the goal is reached. The Congress Organisation was formally dissolved that day and a Dictator was appointed to direct the struggle.

The ways and means of achieving the same were through the methods of truth and non-violence. By courting imprisonment, in defying prohibitory orders, picketing toddy shops and in resorting to Forest Satyagraha. The fight was formally commenced by the first Dictator, Shri T. Siddalingaiah by defying the prohibitory order promulgated in Tumkur. Within one month 7 Dictators and over one thousand Satyagrahis are arrested and over 500 have been convicted. The fight is going on with full swing and with the strictest observation of non-violence. There is no

dearth of men or money. Several volunteer camps are started all over the State. Persons of all classes are eagerly joining the camps.

Our Strength

The Government is using all its repressive measures including that of leaving the Satyagrahis in dense forests in the mid of nights without food and raiment. The people are suffering all this with pleasure. Not being satisfied with the ordinary law of land, they have on 25 September 1939 promulgated an act known as 'Public Security Act' similar to the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act that was promulgated by the Britishers in British India during the Satyagraha days. Publication of this news is cut off by means of censorship and control of the press and the platform. Men like Mr B. Chandrashekhar Shetty, who deserted the Congress have been made Government's scape-goats to misrepresent Mysore Congress abroad. Upto 1st October the Satyagraha was brisk in Mysore, Bangalore, Kolar and Chitaldurg Districts. Now it has commenced all over the State and the State Congress is likely to be declared unlawful very soon. While the attention and thought of All India leaders are reverted towards international situation, the Mysore, Government is out with vindictiveness to crush the movement once for all.

The Congress expects from our leader the guidance and also the first hand and personal touch at this juncture. A tour of several leaders in Mysore State would be of much value to the sons of Mysore.

Ramlal Tiwari (Eighth Director)
Sd Y. Parthnarayan Pandit
Sd/ A.B. Naik

Appendix

[Correspondence between the President of the Mysore Congress and the Dewan regarding the interview referred to in the Statement]

'In the matter of realisation of the objective, namely, immediate establishment of full Responsible Government under the aegis of the Maharaja, the Mysore Congress has decided that an approach should be made to the Government with a view to see if honourable settlement could be arrived at. I hope the Government will reciprocate the feeling. I will be glad to meet you at any time convenient to you if you will be so good as to grant me an interview in this connection.'

In reply to the above letter, the Private Secretary to the Dewan wrote, 'In reply to your letter of today, I am desired to say that the Dewan does not wish to see you.'

Second Letter

'I acknowledge with thanks the letter dated 13th July sent in reply to mine of the same date by your Private Secretary stating that you did not wish to see me. It is indeed unfortunate if that is to be your decision. I need hardly say how advantageous a full and frank discussion might be and how it may open the way for an honourable understanding. I desire to make one more appeal to you and request you to kindly reconsider your decision. I desire also to draw your kind attention to the fact that I addressed a letter yesterday in the capacity of President of Mysore Congress, but the reply letter is addressed to me in my personal capacity without stating my designation. I hope that is a mere omission and has no other significance. Once again I request you to be so good as to grant an interview.'

The Private Secretary replied as follows: 'In reply to your letter of yesterday's date I am desired to tell you that the decisions communicated to you in my letter of the 13th instant cannot be reconsidered.'

Dewan's observations of the pact. In the course of the budget discussion on 22 June 1939 the Dewan observed:—

'The word pact is very offensive to me. I don't agree it was anything of that kind. Only some of which I agreed and some were rejected. They were more in the nature of representations than any thing like demands.'

Sardar Vallabhbhai came here for a different purpose. He interested himself in seeing that some of the gentlemen in jail who would be let free and I had no objection to allow him to interest himself on their behalf. That is all. Let us forget about all that now'.

11. Jawaharlal Nehru's Message to the Mysore State Congress

SWJN, Vol. 10, p. 503

17 October 1939

It is curious that when everyone is talking about a war for democracy and freedom and condemning Nazi aggression, the Indian State system should continue in all its pristine autocracy and attempts to alter and make it responsive to popular will should be suppressed. The writing on the wall is clear, but there are people who still refuse to see it. As Mahatma Gandhi has said, petty Hitlers continue to function in many States¹.

Of Mysore much is expected, for industrially and otherwise it is somewhat more advanced than other states and it is more ripe for the introduction of responsible Government. But autocracy is still entrenched there and popular demands are spurned and promises made to the people have not been kept². I had hoped that wisdom would come to those who control the state Government and they would realise that the time has gone by when they can check the torrent of change. But I have been mistaken and am distressed. And so a conflict has begun again there between the people and those who seek to prevent change and retain autocracy. The conflict can have only one outcome here as elsewhere.

The world is in the throes of vast revolutionary changes and Indian States cannot escape them. Already I am told that 1,200 representatives of the Mysore Congress have been arrested and sentenced. Many of the leaders are in prison. Let this not dishearten anyone, for nations are only made by testing and trial. I hope that the people of Mysore will hold fast to their ideals and be scrupulous about their means, so that nothing may be done which discredits their cause. I wish them all success.

¹ '... every Indian prince is a Hitler in his own State. He can shoot his people without coming under any law. Hitler enjoys no greater powers.' Mahatma Gandhi in his article, '*Unfortunate people of Travancore*', *Harijan*, October 1939.

² The struggle of the people of Mysore state against repression led to the police firing at Vidurashvatham, and the agreement between the State Government and the Congress, reached by Vallabhbhai Patel and J.B. Kriplani, proved short lived.

12. Constitutional Reforms

Hindu, 6 November 1939

6 November 1939

The long-awaited Constitutional Reforms for Mysore announced today have had a mixed reception among leaders of public opinion here. While some leaders welcome the new forms, there are also others who hold that the proposals have fallen far short of the general expectations.

The Congress opinion on the Reforms is not available now, as all the leaders are now behind the bars. The Congress has been agitating for full and immediate Responsible Government under the aegis of His Highness the Maharaja and the need be no doubt whatever that the present reforms will not satisfy the Congress. 'Mocking disappointment', observed Mr D.V. Gundappa,¹ one of the members of the Reforms Committee, when interviewed on the Government order.

Rao Bahadur B.K. Garudachar observed that the present constitution was much better than the one proposed. 'I am afraid the administration under the new reforms,' he added, 'will not be for the public good. Without a provision for a vote of "no confidence" against the Ministers, there could be no responsibility on their part and the Legislature cannot express itself against their acts. The provision for separate electorates is a retrograde step.'

Dewan Bahadur K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar,² Chairman, Reforms Committee, interviewed, expressed satisfaction that the Government has accepted practically all the recommendations of his Committee. The Committee has recommended the declaration of the goal of reforms now promised not because of the doubts about progressive stages but that it would not satisfy public opinion. The Government had not accepted the same but Mr Srinivasa Iyengar was of opinion that the Government must have had good reasons and they were fully explained in the Government order. The fact that the Government had not accepted this recommendation made no difference in the substance of the reforms now granted.

The Government have taken the power to nominate ten members to the Assembly and this was, he said a welcome change. This nomination was not for representation of special interests or removal of communal inequalities but for representation of men with experience, special knowledge and qualifications.

¹ Author of 'Jnapaka Chitrasale'.

² Srinivasa Iyengar, b. 1874; educ: Madura; Advocate and member, Madras Bar Council; member of Madras Senate, 1912-16; member, AICC; member, Indian Legislative Assembly; President, Indian National Congress, 1926-27.

13. A Mysore Innovation

Indian Social Reformer, 9 December 1939

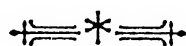
9 December 1939

The Nizam's Government in their scheme of constitutional reform have adopted representation by interests as the basis of their electoral system. It was, no doubt, originally intended that this should do away with the need for communal representation. But it has not done so. The communal principle has had to be superimposed on the interests representation. The working of this novel scheme will be watched with interest. In Mysore the Government has adopted another innovation. The new Constitution continues the existing two Chambers—the Representative Assembly and the Legislative Council—but the Legislature will not be a two chamber only. The Representative Assembly is the older body, having been started soon after the Rendition in 1881. It was to be the medium through which the Government of Maharaja could make their measures better known and understood by the people. Since then from time to time its functions have been enlarged but the direction in which the Assembly has grown, has been in the words of the Reforms Committee's Report, that of the extension of the representative principle in the selection of its members. Although the Assembly had had no Legislative functions it has exerted a growing influence on the Legislative measures of the State. The Legislative Council was established in 1907, with Legislation as its sole function. In British India admission for proposals of Legislation preceded the admission of non-officials to consultation in matters of administration. The Executive Council with some additional

members became the Legislative Council. In Mysore the popular element was given access to administrative affairs before it was admitted to a share in Legislation. In British India the Legislative Council has been enlarged into a Parliamentary body consisting of two Chambers. In Mysore the two bodies under the Reform scheme will continue to be independent of and unconnected with each other except through the Executive Government in the words of the Government Order.'

The two Houses do not correspond to the two chambers of a bicameral Legislature. It may be said that the Representative Assembly embodies the oriental conception of Government, while the Legislative Council represents its accidental conception. The two stand in a peculiar relationship to each other. They are not strictly co-ordinate but supplement each other's functions.

The oriental conception of sovereignty—Hindu and Muslim—did not include the power of Legislation. The sovereign had merely to execute the decisions of the tribunals which traditionally enjoyed the right of interpreting the *Shastras* and the *Koran*. The accidental conception was much the same almost down to the French Revolution. The Common Law of England like the Hindu and Mohammedan Law was outside the authority of the Sovereign. The right of Legislation is really the concomitant of a democratic constitution. It is nevertheless subject to the veto of the Head of the State, though the power may not and cannot be exercised. In Great Britain as in Mysore the two houses originated at different times and for distinct purposes, so much so that by convention the one House is always referred to as 'another place' and not by name in the other Houses. But when two bodies exist side by side they must either cooperate or clash with each other sooner or later. The struggle between the two Houses in Britain has been bitter. Deadlocks have been averted only by the threat of the creation of new peers by use of the Royal prerogative. A hereditary chamber is always at a disadvantage in a conflict with a popular chamber. In the new Mysore constitution the Representative Assembly will, as at the present, be wholly effected, while the Legislative Council will for the first time have a majority of elected representatives. Although Legislation will be the function of the Council, the Representative Assembly will have a hand in shaping its Government, express their entire sympathy with the recommendation of the committee that in the case of legislative, financial and administrative measures under contemplation, Government should as far as possible consult the Assembly and ascertain its views on such measures before taking a final decision. Government has further accepted the recommendation that in addition to a statement of the principles underlying a proposed Bill the Bill itself should be placed before the Assembly and its opinion ascertained. This is further emphasized in the Proclamation of His Highness the Maharaja by the express direction that 'the opinion expressed on any legislative measure by the Assembly will ordinarily be accepted by my Government,' and in exceptional cases where public interests deemed it, the Government, before introducing the Bill in the Legislative Council, will state the reasons for over-riding the Assembly. It is clear that the Government of Mysore regard and intend that the Representative Assembly should be the more important Chamber in the constitution. The Maharaja's Proclamation seems to differ somewhat from the Government order from which we have quoted above, in its views of the relative position of the two Houses. His Highness observes that the two Houses which were originally independent in the origin and functions 'will now be brought into integral relationship with one another.' The Parliamentary system of Government has been found unequal to prompt and efficient action in respect of the complex functions of a modern Government. In times of crises it has become the practice now to resort to National Government and in extreme cases to Government by decree. It is only by trial and experience that India can arrive at a workable model. Experiment, such as those initiated by the States, will enable us to do this.



14. Constitutional Reforms

National Call, 11 December 1939

Bangalore

10 December 1939

'The new scheme of reforms is utterly unworthy of acceptance and any attempt to impose the same should be resisted by people with all the strength at their command' was the view expressed by the Mysore Congress Working Committee through a lengthy resolution released to the press this morning.

The reforms announced by the Government, the Working Committee observed, are 'utterly retrograde in character and quite unacceptable'. The composition of the executive party, official and partly non-official, it is stated, 'is calculated to enslave the selected Ministers, while the utter irresponsibility of the executive to the legislature makes the entire scheme lifeless and unworkable. The extraordinary power of veto and certification vested in the Dewan, not responsible to and irremovable by the legislature, perpetuates an open insult to the demand for Responsible Government.

The resolution also refers to the formation of separate electorates; and the failure to declare the goal and recognise the fundamental rights of citizenship, 'betrays thoroughly the irresponsible attitude on the part of the Government'.

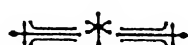
In a lengthy resolution the Working Committee of the Mysore Congress has set out its decision to carry on the satyagraha campaign, except Forest Satyagraha. The Working Committee appeals to all people in the State in this hour of trial to unite solidly and carry on the struggle with yet greater enthusiasm and determination.

After noting with profound gratification 'the splendid response of the country to the call of the Mysore Congress and the great sacrifices which the people throughout the State have made in the cause of freedom and the courage and determination with which the struggle has been carried on in the face of repression', the Working Committee feels that the Government 'by their conduct and activities, have left no alternative to the country but to carry on its struggle with utmost vigour and determination'.

The Working Committee considers it necessary to hold meetings immediately all over the State 'to educate the people and expose the utter hollowness and inadequacy of the reforms and the necessity for carrying steadfastly the struggle for the realisation of the objective of the Congress'.

The Working Committee has also resolved to depute Mr K. Reddy¹ to be with Mahatmaji to apprise him of the course of events from time to time.

¹ K.C. Reddy, a lawyer and President of Kolar District Board; President, Non Brahmin People's Federation; member of the inner circle throughout period after October 1937 and had great influence over Congress affairs.



15. Satyagraha in Mysore: An account of the Satyagraha movement of 1939 in Mysore, (the author not indicated—presumably by the Mysore Congress Committee) with a list of people arrested and convicted

File No. 54/3R VIII, History of Freedom Movement Unit, NAI

not dated

The present activities of the Congress are being conducted under the duration of Dictators and as many as 21 Dictators have already been arrested and 20 of them are convicted. In the last bulletin the total number of arrests was shown as 700; since then during the course of this one month about 1500 more have been arrested thus bringing the total to 2200. The satyagrahis are courting arrests by defying prohibitory orders in Kolar, Mysore, Bangalore and Hassan districts and by resorting to forest satyagraha, i.e., cutting toddy trees in Chitaldurg, Tumkur and Shimoga districts. Picketing of toddy and liquor shops all over the State is also one of the forms of Satyagraha.

The Government were so long making use of Police Act, Indian Penal Code, Criminal Procedure Code and Mysore Forest Act, for securing arrest and convictions. But on 25 September 1939 an emergency act known as Mysore Public Security Act which resembles the Criminal Law Amendment which was in force during the civil disobedience days in British India, was brought into effect and the same was also passed in the recent Representative Assembly (from which all Congressmen had come out last year) in its recent Dasara sessions.

All prominent Kannada papers have condemned the passage of this Act. Even the moderate papers like the *Servant of India* have condemned the Mysore Government for curtailing the civil liberty of the people by enacting the Mysore Public Security Act. Newspapers such as *Sadhvi*, *Prajavani* and *Prajadhawani* have been proscribed.

The Mysore Congress submitted a report to the Standing Committee of the All-India States' People's Conference which met in Wardha on 11 October 1939 and the printed copies of the report were widely distributed to the members of the AICC, which met at the same place on 9th and 10th October...

The first bulletin refers to the denial of the pact arrived at between Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and the Dewan of the State and how this act of the Dewan was severely criticised by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. We are glad that in the recent Dasara sessions of the Assembly Shri N. Madhava Rao,¹ the first member of the Mysore Government, admitted that there was a settlement between Mysore Government and the Congress last year.

The Mysore Congress suspended its satyagraha on 'Vijaya Dashmi' day as a mark of loyalty to the throne of HH the Maharaja of Mysore whose dynasty is intimately connected with celebration of the 'Dasara' festival commonly known as Karnata Nada Habba.

Alarming and disconcerting reports of torturing of the prisoners without food while in police custody, getting terms of apology signed by coercive methods, leaving the satyagrahis in the mid of night without food, are being received every day. Heavy sentences of rigorous imprisonment upto six and half years and fines upto Rs 1000 are inflicted for ordinary offences.

In spite of all this, the movement is growing steadily and non-violence is maintained throughout the State under all provocations by the police.

The Council of the Karnataka PCC which met on 25 October 1939 passed the following resolution:

'Repression in Mysore: This council of the Karnataka PCC while fully appreciating the non-violent struggle that the people of Mysore have been conducting in defence of their fundamental

rights and for Responsible Government in Mysore under the aegis of HH the Maharaja of Mysore, condemns the adoption of such repressive measures as the 'Mysore Public Security Act' restricting the free movement of the citizens.

This Council further would be glad to welcome any rapprochement that would advance the cause of the people'.

The list of convictions is given below in the following pages in continuation of the list given in the first bulletin.

Total number of arrests and convictions till 22 October 1939 as received from the Mysore Congress Office

	Arrests	Convictions	Detentions
1. Mysore City	198	168	23
2. Defence of India Act (at Mysore)	3	3	—
3. 124A	9	7	2
5. 45	2	2	—
6. Forest Satyagraha at Shimoga	139	118	21
7. Chitaldurg	264	166	98
8. Kolar Gold Fields	631	373	258
9. Tumkur	352	280	72
10. Bangalore City	265	110	155
11. Hassan	1	1	—
12. Kadur	1	1	—
13. Mysore Public Security Act	70	9	61
	1931	1241	690

¹ N Madhava Rao, a member of the Executive Council who had been Sir Mirza's second in command, was appointed Dewan on 1 June 1939.

XII TRAVANCORE

1. The Travancore State Congress

Statement by P. Thanu Pillai, 6 January 1939, Pattom Thanu Pillai Papers, File No. 4, NMML

6 January 1939

The Working Committee Travancore State Congress has reviewed within the short time at its disposal the present political situation. Neither the withdrawal of the personal allegations¹ in the Memorandum nor the dropping of the prosecution against the signatories has in the lightest manner altered the political situation.

The whole issue of Responsible Government remains exactly where it was, which means that the immediate task before the Committee is to find the speediest and most effective way to achieve our immediate goal of full Responsible Government. The intentions of Government regarding the constitutional issue are uncertain as ever. The policy of repression is being continued with unabated vigour and several Congress workers have been placed in custody and kept in the several lock-ups. Arrests are taking place almost daily. If the Government will not take advantage of the present atmosphere in the country and take immediate steps towards establishing full Responsible Government and ease the situation resultant on their repressive policy, the Committee will be

compelled to resort to an intensive campaign of direct action. The Council of Action under R. Sankar¹ has placed the prohibition programme before the country, and has issued instructions for the conduct of the campaign for the next three weeks.

While appealing to the country to fully and effectively carry out that programme during the next three weeks, that Committee desires to make clear that when the stage for direct action is reached the programme will include prohibition and other items as will be decided upon by the Committee in consonance with the resolutions passed at the special session of the Congress at Vattiyurkavu. Even during the next three weeks, and especially during the prohibition Jatha marches, as announced in the programme of the Council of Action, the whole political programme of the State Congress should be emphasized and boycott of tobacco in all forms should also be made an integral part of the prohibition propaganda.

¹ Gandhi had told a deputation of Travancore State Congress on 14 November 1938 that the personal allegations against the Dewan should be withdrawn. This was done and Gandhi congratulated the Travancore State Congress President on 25 December 1938 for doing so.

² Member of Travancore State Congress and Acting President.

2. On Future Programme of State Congress

Statement by P. Thanu Pillai, 14 January 1939, Pattom Thanu Pillai Papers, File No. 4, NMML

14 January 1939

I wish to draw the attention of the public to the present position and future programme of the State Congress. The State Congress was formed and grew in strength because the people are clearly convinced of the necessity for Responsible Government... People are dissatisfied with the present system. It is sometimes said that both the houses of the bicameral legislature in Travancore have non-official majorities and they exercise effective financial control. The Lower House consists of seventy-two nominated by Government and five represent special interests such as planting, etc., which almost generally stand by the side of Government. In a legislature of this kind, it is quite easy for an irremovable executive, not responsible to the people and enjoying all powers and patronage, to have their own way in matters relating to the administration of the State. The Finance Committee is not a statutory body and even the unanimous opinion of its non-official members receive very little respect from Government. Popular bodies, like the legislature of Travancore without power and responsibility, often prove detrimental to public interests instead of safeguarding them. I make this statement deliberately, as a result of about a dozen years' experience as a member of the Legislature of Travancore. Considerable portion of the expenditure are not subjected to the vote of year without reference to the Legislature.

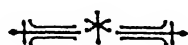
From the time of the formation of the State Congress, Government have been trying to suppress the popular demand for Responsible Government by condemning that organisation as a communal body and as being activated by personal motives. It is unnecessary here to dwell upon the various methods adopted by the Government till the promulgation of the Criminal Law Amendment Regulation 7 of 1934. That Regulation was promulgated for suppressing the movement. Government hoped that by declaring the State Congress an illegal organisation under the provisions of the Regulation, the movement for Responsible Government could be killed. They were solely mistaken. The popular will was too strong. It is a matter of common knowledge how the people reacted to the Government policy. Government realised that the demand of the people for Responsible Government was irresistible and retarded their steps and withdrew for the time being their declaration that the State Congress was unlawful body. It was expected that the Government

would do the right thing in regard to the question of Responsible Government. During the three months that have elapsed since (the release of political prisoners), Government have not only not taken any steps for meeting the popular demand, but have been pursuing their old game of trying to destroy the State Congress and the movement for Responsible Government. It is also important to remember in this connection that the Government have not during all this period paid any heed to the persistent demands from the public as well as from Mahatma Gandhi for an enquiry into the shootings resulting in several deaths that took place in no less than nine places during the period when the State Congress was declared illegal by Government. They have also ignored the demand for enquiry into other military and police excesses including the lathi charges on students in college premises. The All Travancore State Congress Conferences that had been arranged to take place at Vattiyurkavu near Trivandrum was banned by the District Magistrate. The popular determination asserted itself again and the Conference was held in defiance of the ban. One more Criminal Law Amendment Regulation X of 1114, further infringing the civil liberties of the citizens, has been promulgated with a view to suppress the movement. Many Congress volunteers have been arrested and kept in custody under its provisions. The State Congress adopted prohibition as part of its programme, and Congressmen doing prohibition propaganda are also being arrested. Congress offices are being raided and Congressmen and Congress records being taken into custody. Already there are hundreds of Congress undertrial prisoners in the Central Prison Trivandrum and in the police lock-ups. Trials are unjustifiably postponed and Congressmen are put to unnecessary hardship as undertrial prisoners...

There seems to be an impression in some quarters that the withdrawal of the personal allegations against the Dewan by the Working Committee will weaken the State Congress. It is true that there is considerable body of opinion in the country against the withdrawal, but it is foolish to hope that it will lead to a weakening of the Congress movement. The demand for Responsible Government has arisen out of a clear realisation of its necessity, and that necessity has not become any less by the difficulty in understanding that it is not the removal of one Dewan, whatever may be their feelings against him, but the prevention of the functioning as at present of all Dewans in future that can really benefit the State. Those that entertain hopes of seeing the weakening of the State Congress will soon be disillusioned.

The fact is that the people are thirsting for effective direct action to complete the work of the State Congress. Except the violation of the ban on the Vattiyurkavu Conference, which was inevitable in the case of a self-respecting organisation like the Congress, the State Congress has consistently refrained during the last three months from doing anything calculated to disturb the calmness of the political atmosphere of the State. And this in spite of ample provocation from Government.

The State Congress is now being goaded on to direct action by the attitude and activities of Government which can be taken to be nothing less than a challenge. The State Congress, it is humbly submitted, is prepared to take the challenge. At the same time I request the well meaning public both within and outside the State to kindly realise that it is not a desire to create unnecessary difficulties for Government that impels the State Congress to resort to effective direct action. The Congress is anxious to avoid all conflicts with Government consistently with its duty to the country and to itself. May I now hope that when the State Congress at no distant date, if need, resolves upon a programme of direct action, it will have the full and unstinted support not only of people of Travancore but also of the sympathetic world outside.



3. Why the Withdrawal: This is Gandhi's discussion with the deputationists who met him at Shegaon on 15 November 1938

Harijan, 28 January 1939

Bardoli

23 January 1939

'I have received reports that there has been violence on a considerable scale in Travancore. On the other hand I have received wires from the State Congress dictators saying that there has been no violence whatever for which they can be held responsible, that whatever violence there has been was instigated by the authorities. It has been alleged too that there has been secret endorsement of violence by the State Congress people though they are not directly responsible for it. What I say is that if there has been mob violence, by whomsoever wrought, it shows that the State Congress has not acquired sufficient control over the masses. In that case civil disobedience has to be suspended even as was done by me more than once. I admit you were behind the prison bars when most of the alleged cases of violence took place. I appreciate also the fact that you did not get a chance of educating the masses into discipline. I entirely endorse your view that the fight should not be merely to wrest a few concessions from the authorities but for establishing real Responsible Government. But all that, to my mind, makes out a case for doing more spadework among the masses. You must build from below.'

'You tell me that you regard the removal of the Dewan would help your movement as he is the chief obstacle in your way. If you persist in the charges you must be prepared to prove them. But in my opinion it will have the inevitable result of pushing the question of Responsible Government into the background by bringing to the fore a purely personal issue. I call that playing the enemy's game. And you would give the wrong lead to the people. I do not want you to withdraw the allegations because they are not true.... I want these allegations to be withdrawn because you have a far bigger issue at stake. The greater includes the less(!) Removal of the Dewan by itself would not give you Responsible Government. A clever Dewan might choose to slip out and remain in the background while the storm has blown over and in the meantime use a substitute to crush the movement. Such things have happened before and will happen again. On the other hand Responsible Government includes the power to dismiss ministers according to the popular will. You therefore say, without abating an iota from your charges, that you do not want to dissipate your energy by pursuing these charges. These are the two alternatives before you, both of them perfectly legitimate. You have to make your choice. You should know best the psychology of your people. It may be such that the fight can be best conducted through the agitation to remove the Dewan. Personally, when I weigh the pros and cons of the matter, I feel like saying you should swallow the bitter cup and concentrate on getting the reins of power into your hands.'

'But whatever the decision about the allegations, I would advise you not to restart civil disobedience just now. You should put your own house in order. If you keep unadulterated non-violence at the back of your minds, you would not say, "let us take time by the forelock, and now that there is all this energy bubbling forth, let us consolidate our gains". You would not capture power by madly frittering away the energy generated. That way lies danger. You will, if you follow that, only pave the way for the political schemers who may exploit the situation for furthering their own designs. I would therefore ask you to go slow, steadily gathering all the threads into your hands. You should become a homogeneous and disciplined mass by undergoing training in constructive work and non-violence; you may not take another forward step without conversing public opinion inside and outside Travancore first.'

'Apparently there may be no connection between constructive work and non-violence; but there is an internal logic connecting the two when constructive work is taken up as a part of a non-violence programme. The National Flag, for instance, was conceived as a symbol of unity, purity and non-violence. It is the place that we have given it in our non-violence programme that gives it its significance and importance; by itself it has no virtue. In prosecuting your constructive programme, you must always keep the background of non-violence before your mind.

'Then I should ask students to remain apart from the civil disobedience part of the struggle and should not carry on any propaganda in their midst. It is not proper to ask students of school-going age to do such work. It is a sign of weakness. It is like asking children to undergo suffering for their parents.'

'But the students can and ought to take part in the struggle by becoming adepts in Charkha and other items in the constructive programme, as the Chinese students are doing while the fight against Japan is going on. The Chinese students are working to preserve the essentials of Chinese culture through their programme of New Education. They are helping to create a National spirit which will remain unsubdued irrespective of the fortunes of the Chinese arms on the battlefield.'

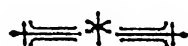
'The satyagraha struggle in British India had two aspects, non-violent non-cooperation with the Government and co-operation among the people themselves. But these aspects should constantly be kept before the mind's eye. The constructive programme that I have set before you necessitated perfect co-operation among all the sections. You will therefore go among the Pulayas and the Pariahs, fraternize with them and appeal to them as fellow countrymen and equals to come out and take their due share in the sacred fight along with the Brahmans, Ezhwas, Christians and others. You must all become one. You dare not leave out or antagonize a single section or community without stultifying yourselves and damaging your fight.'

'Then there is the prohibition work. You would not picket just now, but you would visit the drunkards in their homes and strive with them. Even if you do not succeed in producing immediate tangible results, it will put your struggle on a moral plane and add strength and momentum to it.'

'Travancore people, both men and women, are so simple in their habits. They wear white and need very little cloth to protect them against the elements. They can easily produce all the Khadi they need. Travancore need not import a single yard of cloth or even Khadi from outside. This means that there should be a spinning wheel in every home.'

'And Khadi should be linked with liberty. All the time you are spinning, you would think not in terms of your own requirements but in terms of the requirement of the nation. You will say, "I sent the cloth to whole nation that is naked and I must do it non-violently." Each time you draw a thread say to yourselves, "we are drawing the thread of Swaraj." Multiply this picture million fold and you have freedom knocking at your doors.'

¹ Gandhi told a deputation on 13-14 November 1938 'that their cause would be damaged by persistence in the charges against the Dewan and that the question was not one of the truth or otherwise of the charges. It was one of political insight'. He insisted that this in no way meant suspension of the struggle. It meant merely a change of the emphasis on the instruments. An instrument of permanent value was constructive programme. The employment of civil disobedience had well-defined limitations and required suspension as the occasion demanded'. *Harijan*, 17 December 1938, M.K. Gandhi, *The Indian States' Problem* (Navajivan Press: Ahmedabad, 1941).



4. The Travancore Affairs

Hindustan Times, 12 February 1939

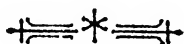
12 February

... The categorical denial by Mahatma Gandhi of the charge that he had been partial to the Dewan in his handling of the Travancore situation is not without significance in this connection. It has served to clear up many serious misapprehensions that had lately come to be entertained by a good many people here. One was daily hearing all sorts of fantastic rumours, one was confronted by the same question as was put to Mahatma Gandhi by his Christian friend. It was asked, why should Mahatma be insisting on withdrawal of the Congress memorandum, and, at the same time, be keeping mum over all the unjust actions of Government. Gandhi's clarification of the position has, therefore, been widely welcome, particularly his views regarding the present Dewan retaining his office. The ultimate effect of his statement, so far as the Congress is concerned, has been to steady up the Christians within the Congress whose minds were being unsettled by suspicions.

Thus it is plain that if Government are looking forward to a weakening of the Congress movement, they are bound to be undeceived. The demands put forward by the Congress are, on the face of them, eminently reasonable. Some of them, like the demand for enquiry into the firing by the police and military during the last civil disobedience campaign are as old as the happenings themselves and they were being repeatedly passed ever since. Mahatma Gandhi also had demanded an enquiry into the incidents. The State Congress has now done well in raising the demand instead of letting the Government be complacent over it as a thing of the past...

As regards taking immediate steps for the establishment of Responsible Government which is the most fundamental of all the demands, it is difficult to see what can possibly prevent the Government from doing so. We have it on the word of C.P. Ramaswami Aiyar himself that the next progress is only Responsible Government, but that the utmost deliberation was necessary to grant Responsible Government, without prejudice to the interests of any community. CP's awareness of the need for deliberation is, of course, commendable. But the pity of it is that he does not seem to be in any mood to deliberate. Perhaps he might be deliberating all by himself. But the public would refuse to be convinced, and in all probability would also refuse to accept the result of such deliberation. The public are certainly entitled to be taken into confidence, and the representatives of the public must also have their say in any deliberation regarding Responsible Government.

To conclude, the Congress demands are in fact so irresistible by reason of the sanction of the people behind them that the only statesman-like way for Government would be to accept them in toto. It has been made clear by the Congress leaders that there can be no going back on these demands. If the Government refuse to accept the demands, the country will be plunged in to the sufferings of another civil disobedience movement which is sure to be more intense than the previous one, since it includes such items as non-payment of taxes, while the first fight was only directed against the ban on the Congress. It is possible for Government to avert the crisis by a wise handling of the situation. On the other hand, if it is precipitated, the responsibility will also be theirs.



5. Gandhi on Travancore Movement

Harijan, 18 February 1939, M.K. Gandhi, *The Indian State's Problem*, pp. 167-69

Segaon

13 February 1939

Though I have been apparently silent about Travancore, the workers may rest assured that I have not been neglectful. Some times silence is more telling than speech. All I am free to say that I have been usefully silent. I am sorry that all has not gone well. I had hoped that when the State Congress withdrew the allegations against the Dewan,¹ things would run smoothly and the movement for Responsible Government would be allowed full play. But the bulletin reproduced elsewhere shows that there is no such luck for the Travancoreans.² The unseating of 19 prominent members of the Travancore Assembly seems to be vindictive.³ Have they done anything dishonourable? Not that I know of.

I have before me a letter describing the ill-treatment of Shrimati Akkammaa Cherian,⁴ a political prisoner. If what she declared in court is true, the treatment was surely disgraceful. She is a cultured woman. She gave up the headmistresship of a school in order to join the struggle for liberty. It hurts one to think that in an advanced State like Travancore, which boasts of an enlightened Prince,⁵ an equally enlightened Maharani,⁶ his mother, and an experienced Dewan, liberty is being choked by rude repression.

But another letter tells me that this repression is taking place in the name of Hinduism and for the sake of saving a Hindu State! It has been suggested that the idea is to repress the Christians who are playing a prominent part in the struggle for freedom.

It is surely late in the day to talk of Hindu States and Muslim States. And what is the test? Is Kashmir a Hindu State because a Hindu Prince happens to rule territory which has an overwhelming majority of Muslims as inhabitants? Or is Hyderabad with its overwhelming Hindu population a Muslim State because a Muslim Prince rules their destiny? I regard this kind of talk as a libel on nationalism. Is India a Christian state because a Christian king rules over her destiny? But India is Indian no matter who rules, the states are also Indian no matter who happens to be the ruler. And the present Rulers and their successors will rule only by the grace of an awakened people. The awakening that has taken place has come to stay. Every day quickens the pace. The Rulers and their advisers may succeed for the time being in suppressing the spirit of the people. They will never succeed in killing it. To succeed would be to kill the spirit of the people of India. Is anyone in India so short-sighted as to feel that independence is not coming soon? And is it possible to conceive that an independent India will for one moment tolerate repression in any single spot, be it ever so big or ever so small? There is room, in my conception of an independent India, for States with Princes as constitutional trustees, as in Aundh. There is room for Englishmen as fellow-servants of the people, never as masters. Therefore, the only way in which the princes can live in a free India is for them now to recognise the time spirit, bow to it and act accordingly. Let it be the boast of the Hindu Prince, his Hindu mother and their Hindu Dewan that they were not afraid of their Christian citizens. Supposing there was Responsible Government in Travancore, what could the Christians or the Hindus or the Muslims do? Whoever the Legislators, they will be responsible to the voters. There is no room for fear, there is no hitch in the process. But in the present repression, there is much to fear and there are many hitches.

¹ This was done at the instance of Gandhi. In his message to the President of the Trivandrum State Congress on or before 25 December 1938, the Mahatma said that he was delighted that personal allegations against the Dewan were withdrawn. He added that civil disobedience be suspended as well so as to examine the whole position afresh.

² 'Travancore Bulletin' by G. Ramachandran. In his article on Travancore published on 14 January 1939, Gandhi referred to Ramachandran in the following way: 'I claim that in other State movements have I taken so much interest as in the Travancore movement, for the simple reason that I was pressed to do so by Shri G. Ramachandran who belongs to Sabarmati Ashram and in whose wisdom, courage, sincerity and non-violence I have very great faith'. *CWMG*, vol 68, p 288. For Travancore Bulletin, see M.K. Gandhi, *The Indian States' Problem*, pp. 453-60.

³ The members belonged to the State Congress and were disqualified on the ground of their having been convicted under the Criminal Law Amendment Regulation.

⁴ P. Ramaswamy Aiyer, b. 1879; Educ: Wesleyan High School, Presidency College and Law College, Madras; joined the Madras Bar, 1903; member, Madras Corporation, 1911; University member of Legislative Council, Madras, 1919; Advocate General for the Residency, 1920; Delegate to Round Table Conference; Acting Law member, Government of India, 1931; Dewan of Travancore, 1936; Vice Chancellor, Travancore University, 1937.

⁵ Raja Bahadur Shamsher Jang, b. 1912; invested with ruling powers in 1931; educated privately; Andhra and Annamalai University conferred the Honorary degree of D.Litt. on His Highness; Colonel-in-Chief of the Travancore State forces; Chancellor, Travancore University.

⁶ Maharani Setu Parvati Bai

6. All-Travancore Responsible Government Day

Hindu, 15 February 1939

Trivandrum
15 February 1939

Under the auspices of the Travancore State Congress, public meetings were held yesterday all over Travancore in pursuance of the programme of the Working Committee to observe the All-Travancore Responsible Government Day. Pattom Thanu Pillai¹, President, Travancore State Congress, presided over the public meeting here last evening at Putharikandom Maidan. Two resolutions of the State Congress regarding franchise and the demand for Responsible Government under the aegis of the Maharaja were adopted at the meeting. Messrs G. Ramachandran², C. Narayana Pillai³, and N.S. Krishna Pillai addressed the gathering.

In pursuance of the decision of the Travancore State Congress Working Committee, Alleppey observed yesterday the All Travancore Responsible Government Day. A well-attended public meeting was held at Kadagama Parambu *Maidan* under the auspices of the local State Congress Committee. T.A. Abdulla, President, T.M. Verghese⁴, M.G. Mathew⁵ and State Congress leaders addressed the gathering after which resolution demanding the immediate establishment of Responsible Government under the aegis of the Maharaja and opposing the move for altering the existing electoral system were passed.

The Responsible Government Day was observed in part of Quillon today. A public meeting was held this evening at Kochupilamood Beach under the presidency of N. Padmanabha Pillai⁶, Advocate. The President said that the day was being observed to express the unanimous desire of the people of Travancore to have Responsible Government established in the near future under the aegis of the Maharaja of Travancore. The people had already demonstrated their feeling on the matter in an unmistakable manner.

R. Sankar said that the attempt to get the present voting system changed was a mere device to derive a wedge between the different communities in the State. He warned people against diverting their attention to such minor matters as long as the main question of Responsible Government remained unsolved ... Resolutions were passed demanding Responsible Government under the aegis of the Maharaja and protesting against the attempts made by a few people to change the present system of voting. K. Kesavan also addressed the meeting.

To observe the Responsible Government Day, a public meeting under the auspices of the Alwaye branch of the Travancore State Congress was held yesterday at the local *Maidan* with M.V. Chacko as President. The President said that the Government were not responsible to the

people. The people wanted to change that system. Representatives of the people elected under a system of adult franchise should advise the Maharaja on the administration. The President also criticised that action of the Government in disqualifying convicted State Congress Legislators. P.K. Benjamin condemned the repressive policy of the Government and said that the last struggle must have shown to the Government such a policy was futile. K.P. Paul criticised the Government's decision to disqualify the convicted State Congress Legislators. Gracy Kuruvilla, Cardina Mentis, M.C. Varkey and K.T. Joseph also spoke after which the meeting reiterated the resolutions passed at the Trivandrum protest meeting held on the 8th instant under the Presidency of K. Parameswaran Pillai.

Meeting were also held at Muvattuapuzha and Kottattuku to observe the Responsible Government Day. Resolutions were passed at both the meetings demanding Responsible Government and protesting against the Nair Society Memorial for delimitation of constituencies.

¹ Pattom Thanu Pillai (1885–1970); educ: Government High School; Maharaja's College and Government Law College, Trivandrum; started practice as Lawyer, 1915; elected to Travancore Legislature, 1927; President Travancore State Congress, 1938; imprisoned several times; demand for Responsible Government continued under Pillai's leadership; Leader of Congress Party, State Legislative Assembly, 1948; Chief Minister, Travancore-Cochin State, 1954; Chief Minister Kerala, 1960.

² G. Ramachandran, b. 1904; primary education at Parur High School, Trivandrum; SSLC examination from St. Joseph's High School; BA Honours from Visva Bharti, Santiniketan, deeply influenced by Tagore and Gandhi; Secretary, Harijan Sevak Sangh, Madras and Kerala; participated in Travancore State Congress movement in 1938; imprisoned during Quit India movement; Joint editor, Indian Express, 1944–45; member, Travancore Legislative Assembly, 1947; Nominated to Rajya Sabha, 1964.

³ C. Narayana Pillai, b. 1902; educ: Schooling at Edappally, Sherpally and Alwaye; joined Union College, Alwaye and then Maharaja's College, Trivandrum; Bachelor of Law (BL) from Law College, Trivandrum; 1932; gave up law and joined agitation against autocratic State in Travancore; imprisoned several times; after independence, member, State Legislature; member, Rajya Sabha.

⁴ T.M. Verghese (1885–61); matriculation from Government High School, Mavelikkara; Graduated from Maharaja's College, Trivandrum; BL in 1914; joined Travancore State Congress in 1938; arrested several times; elected member of Travancore Legislature, 1937; 1948, member of the First popular Ministry of Travancore, Speaker, Travancore-Cochin Legislative Assembly in 1949.

⁵ Member, Working Committee, Travancore State Congress.

⁶ Member, Working Committee, Travancore State Congress.

7. 'Travancore Again'—Gandhi

Harijan, 25 February 1939, and *CWMG*, Vol. 68, pp. 432–34

Segon

20 February 1939

I take the following from Ramachandran's letter to the Rajkumari:

I know there is nothing we can expect unless we burn ourselves out peacefully and truthfully for the cause for which we stand. You must have seen how at the last meeting of the Working Committee of the State Congress we laid down a time limit of six weeks before commencing a programme of civil resistance. God is witness that we are anxious for peace. But there has been no enquiry into shootings, which took place in nine places. Many lawyers convicted during the last campaign have been debarred from practising for two years. 19 members of the State Congress Party in the legislature have been disqualified just on the eve of the present session now sitting. Government had ample time to notify disqualification earlier and order re-elections in time. Now 19 constituencies remain unrepresented. Fines have not been refunded. Confiscated property has not been returned. Cancellation of newspapers licences remains intact. One would have thought

that the birthday amnesty would include all these. Instead systematic attempt has been made to destroy the State Congress volunteer organisation under another iniquitous regulation brought into force for that specific purpose. Just now there are over 200 political prisoners. Many respectable people have been arrested under section 90 meant for security proceedings against goondas. Fresh accommodation has been added in the central jail. Over 1,000 special police have been recruited from among bad elements at the astounding monthly salary of Rs 5. Can anything beat that? And as though the Travancore police cannot be trusted to do the dirty work, numerous police constables have been recruited from outside Travancore. The Government's policy of repression has gone on unabated, without fuss and without precipitating a frontal battle. That is why we feel compelled to lay down a time limit of six weeks. I wish you to study carefully papers I have sent to Bapu, specially the two resolutions we passed at the last meeting of the Working Committee. I am oppressed with the idea that C.P. Ramaswamy Aiyar's policy will create a gulf between the Ruler and the People.

I have refrained from giving in these columns the resolutions and the preface referred to in the letters. It is well for the reader to have these before him to enable him to judge what the State Congress is doing. They will be found elsewhere in this issue.

The documents make painful reading. What has happened since the amnesty has robbed it of the grace that should accompany generous amnesties as this one on the birthday of the Maharaja was claimed to be. It was a spontaneous gesture. After-events seems to suggest that it was no gesture of generosity, but that it was a part of the tactics adopted by the authorities to allay the agitation that was rising against the Travancore Durbar and to divide the people in Travancore. If the information given by Shri Ramachandran is correct, the second object has not been gained, and the first was purely achieved. For the Indian Press was inclined to believe, after the release of prisoners, that the fight was over.

I would love to think that there was no sinister motive behind the partial amnesty. If so, it seems to me to be quite easy to conciliate the State Congress, unless crushing, not consolidation, is the aim of the authorities. Let the amnesty be completed and Reforms Committee be appointed in consultation with the State Congress, and peace between the Prince and the People is assured.

But there may be no such good fortune either for the people or the Prince. In that case the State Congressmen should remember that satyagraha, if it is the greatest force in the world, requires also the capacity for the greatest suffering with a heart without anger and malice. Whilst it is right to publish the news about the doings of the oppressor, there must be infinite patience for endless suffering and yet a burning faith in the ultimate success of truth.

It is well that Congress has fixed upon a six week's limit. But if it is found that six weeks are not enough for ensuring non-violence as far as it is humanly possible and for also ensuring continuity of constructive work, there would be no shame but additional credit in taking further postponement. If thoughtless persons and unkind critics regard such postponement as a sign of weakness, the fighters need not such imputations. After all the soldier knows when to stay his hand and when to move on. He knows that often there is action in so-called inaction and imprudent action is worse than real inaction. And weak is not he who is so called but who feels that he is weak. Let the members of the Working Committee realise that the technique on non-violent action requires general and effective control over forces of violence, no matter how or by whom instigated. If and when the struggle is resumed, I hope that in answer to my wires I will not be told that the State Congress is not responsible for violence if it breaks out. Does not Responsible Government mean that the people, instead of a dictator appointed by a Paramount Power, are responsible for all the acts of the people? Let them realise that if violence breaks out on any appreciable scale, it might,

very probably will, be a call for another suspension, even as there was suspension in Bardoli, though violence broke out in far-off Chauri Chaura.

8. Public Meetings

Hindu, 22 February 1939

22 February 1939

Under the auspices of the Travancore State Congress, a largely attended public meeting was held at Kilikloor, a suburban village, under the presidency of Pattom Thanu Pillai, President of the Travancore State Congress.

Thanu Pillai began his address by referring to the origin and growth of the State Congress. The demand of the State Congress for Responsible Government was nothing unreasonable and unnatural. Travancore was a country which was much ahead of other parts of India educationally, socially and in many other respects. The demand of such a people to have a voice in the administration of their country could never be turned down by any Government. Moreover, the present constitution in Travancore showed the great necessity for the introduction of Responsible Government at the earliest opportunity. Proceeding, the President asked the people to be prepared to suffer and sacrifice more in the next fight with the Government. The people had a duty to fulfill to the State Congress, and that was that they should remain completely non-violent. Concluding, he exhorted the people to join the State Congress in large numbers.

Meeting at Prakkulam

Over 5,000 people attended a State Congress meeting held day before yesterday at Prakkulam, a suburb of Quilon. In the presence of Pattom Thanu Pillai, T.M. Varghese presided over the meeting. The President and the speakers were given a grand reception on arrival and were taken in a procession to the meeting place. V.A. Mohomed Kunju welcomed the gathering.

Address at Kallada

Under the auspices of the Travancore State Congress a meeting was held day before yesterday at East Kallada under the Presidency of T.M. Varghese. More than 10,000 attended the meeting. Madhavan Pillai¹ welcomed the gathering and T.M. Varghese, in the course of his address, said that it was over 25 years since the agitation for Responsible Government was started in Travancore. He appealed to the audience to join the State Congress in large numbers and thus strengthen the movement...

¹ P.S. Madhavan Pillai of Mavhikara was an important labour leader.

9. Bardoli of Travancore —the Neyyattinkara State Congress

Hindu, 22 February 1939

22 February 1939

Neyyattinkara taluk has been sometimes called the Bardoli of Travancore. I do not think we really and fully deserved this compliment, but if the unity that we see here today at this conference and also the determination and courage which has sprung up everywhere in the taluk will continue and increase in the coming days of trial, then perhaps we shall have deserved the compliment.

Neyyattinkara undoubtedly leads today in organisation of the masses for the coming struggle among the taluks of Travancore; the message of the State Congress has been carried to the remotest villages and men and women have responded full heartedly and with determination. 'I have no doubt that Neyyattinkara will lead the whole of Travancore in the coming struggle for Freedom', said G. Ramachandran in his speech at the Neyyattinkara State Congress conference held yesterday at the Coruttukaka Maidan, Neyyattinkara. The Conference was attended by nearly 10,000 people from every nook and corner of the taluk.

At 4 p.m. V.K. Velayudhan,¹ President of the Conference, T.M. Varghese who opened the Conference, and John Phillipose,² who had agreed to perform the flag hoisting ceremony, and other leaders were taken to the meeting place in a big procession in which nearly a thousand khadi-clad volunteers marched with utmost discipline. N.K. Padmanabha Pillai, ex-Municipal Chairman, R.V. Vasudevan Pillai, President, Taluk Cooperative Bank, G. Ramachandran, Chairman of the Reception Committee, and others received the President, and party and garlanded them amidst cries of 'Mahatma Gandhi ki Jai' and 'State Congress ki Jai'. The impressive procession took nearly an hour to reach the Maidan where the leaders were accommodated on a big dais under a decorated canopy. Leaders and workers from many parts of Travancore were seated on the dais, including K.P. Nilakanta Pillai, Secretary of the State Congress, R. Sankar, Ex-President of the Council of Action, K. Gopala Pillai, Secretary of the Trivandrum State Congress Committee, and others.

John Phillipose performed the flag hoisting ceremony. Nearly a thousand volunteers stood round the flag in a ring. John Phillipose said that the flag he had raised was the flag of freedom and unity. It represented the will and the determination of the people to face any suffering that might be necessary to win freedom...

T.M. Varghese, in opening the Conference, said that he felt happy to be in Neyyattinkara where the State Congress was strong and well organised. The sight of thousands of volunteers marching in discipline was an inspiration to him. He said that the greatest contribution of the State Congress in Travancore Politics was its achievement of communal unity. Such unity was considered almost impossible only a year ago yet the State Congress had achieved the impossible. He said that the only interpretation he could put upon the Inspector-General's statement that the State Congress was dead, was that Responsible Government was coming immediately when perhaps there would be no need for an organisation like the State Congress. He declared the Conference open amidst loud cries of State Congress-ki-jai.

V.K. Velayudhan then delivered his presidential address.... He would tell the people of the other taluks what a fine example Neyyattinkara was of communal unity and of the organised effort for freedom. If there was weakness anywhere or hesitation, he would hold up the example of Neyyattinkara. The secret of the community unity which the State Congress had achieved lay in the fact that the State Congress stood for the fullest justice to every community in the land. So long as the State Congress maintained that fundamental attitude, every community would work under its flag. The State Congress was growing from strength to strength and the people were looking to it for the solution of all their difficulties. The State Congress was standing on the eve of a great struggle. It was pledged to start direct action before a couple of weeks were over. They had given six weeks' time to Government and that after waiting for several months together take steps to establish Responsible Government or to face another storm. Responsible Government based on adult franchise would solve all communal troubles. Adult franchise was the only remedy to put a stop to communal claims regarding franchise. He did not believe that literacy was an essential condition for adult franchise. Travancore was in every way fit for adult franchise. But he would warn people that the coming struggle would be most difficult and would call for great courage and

sacrifice. They had openly declared that non-violence was the basis of their struggle, and in non-violence discipline was the only way of success of their movement. He made a passionate plea for the maintenance of non-violence in word, deed and thought.

The first resolution demanding that Government should take immediate steps for establishing full Responsible Government was moved from the Chair and passed.

The second resolution, moved by C. Narayan Pillai and supported by K.P.K. Nayar, warned Government not to make any change in the existing voting system or to surrender to the clamour of a certain section of the Nairs for such a change, as such change would under the present conditions lead to communal disharmony. The third resolution welcomed the State Congress Working Committee's decision to restart direct action and expressed the readiness of the people of Neyyattinkara to do everything in their power to implement that decision. This resolution was moved by R. Sankar...

¹ V.K. Velayudhan, BA, MA; member, Working Committee, Travancore State Congress; Deputy leader of Congress Party in the Assembly.

² Elanjikkal John Phillipose (1903–55); graduated from Maharaja Arts College, Trivandrum, BL from Law College, 1928; Set up practice as lawyer in 1935; joined Travancore State Congress in 1938; imprisoned several times; after independence elected to State Legislative Assembly.

³ Khan Bahadur G.S. Abdul Karim.

10. Call for Civil Disobedience

Times of India, 9 March 1939

9 March 1939

The Working Committee of the Travancore State Congress has fixed March 25 for commencing civil disobedience 'in select centers in the State'.

The Committee states that the decision has been taken after the fullest consideration of every relevant matter before the Committee. In spite of all its anxiety to avoid a conflict with Government, there is now no other way open to it than to take up the responsibility of inviting the people in the State to what might be a prolonged and intense struggle, involving great sacrifices.

The Committee observes that though there was general release of political prisoners during the Maharaja's birthday celebrations in October, the numerous disabilities resulting from the convictions has been allowed to continue without the slightest relief in any direction. It was clear beyond a shadow of doubt that the general release of prisoners was in no sense an indication of any change of heart on the part of Government.

The Committee has also passed a resolution respectfully drawing the attention of the Tripuri Congress to have 'grave crisis that exists in Travancore and the decision of this Committee to commence satyagraha in Travancore on 25th March, and appeals to the Tripuri Congress to arrive at a decision which would make possible for the Indian National Congress to take an active part in the freedom movement in the Indian States'.

11. Gandhi on Travancore

CWMG, Vol. 68, pp. 453–60

18 March 1939

'Having been out of touch with everything since my leaving Segaon, that is nearly a fortnight, I do not feel competent to give decisive opinion upon the pending resumption of civil resistance in

Travancore. But I have no difficulty in stating certain general principles. The first indispensable constitution precedent to any civil resistance is that there should be surety against any outbreak of violence whether on the part of those who are identified with civil resistance or on the part of the general public. It would be no answer, in the case of an outbreak of violence, that it was instigated by the State or other agencies hostile to civil resisters. It should be obvious that civil resistance cannot flourish in an atmosphere of violence. This does not mean that the resources of a satyagrahi have come to an end. Ways other than civil disobedience should be found out. The second condition is that disobedience should not be destructive, i.e., harmful to the country. The laws to be picked up, therefore, should be those which are harmful to the people or laws whose breach will not harm the people but are likely merely to make more work for the authorities. Thirdly, it must be a movement in which the largest number of people can take part. Fourthly, students should not be invited or allowed to take part in civil resistance. There should be no secrecy. Civil resisters must conform to the minimum requirements that may be laid down for the sake of discipline or otherwise.'

Asked why he asked students to come out of colleges and schools in 1921 and participate in non-cooperation and why he was opposed to students' participation in the movement now, Gandhiji explained that the position then was different. He asked students to empty colleges etc., by way of non-cooperation. The moment the student comes out of the college he becomes a citizen, when he is free to participate in the movement. He would have no quarrel if students left colleges altogether and participate in the movement.

12. Appeal for Civil Disobedience

Statement by Pattom Thanu Pillai after his arrest. *The Madras Mail*, 19 March 1939, Pattom Thanu Pillai Papers, File No. 5 (newspaper cuttings), NMML

19 March 1939

I hope that civil disobedience will be duly started by the State Congress and that the people of the State will discharge their duty to their land in this hour of need and trial. I fully hope that the campaign will be conducted in the spirit of truth and non-violence in which it ought to be conducted. I request all friends and well-wishers of the freedom movement in the State to extend their support and sympathy to the people of Travancore and help to see that a bright chapter in its history is opened.

13. Statement by G. Ramachandran: Statement by G. Ramachandran, Member, Council of Action of the Travancore State Congress, in reply to C.P. Ramaswamy Aiyar

Hindu, 19 March 1939, Pattom Thanu Pillai Papers, File No. 5/39 (newspaper cuttings), NMML

19 March 1939

Extracts

Ordinarily I would be the last person to appear in the press as the signatory of an open letter addressed to you. I am aware that I am only a humble person. Hence it is with the greatest hesitation and with the utmost misgiving that I venture to write this open letter to you. An overwhelming sense of duty compels me to do so. For the last several days I desisted and shrank from this task. But as soon as I saw the Associated Press version of your speech delivered on

March 5, at the Police Presentation Parade in Travancore, I made up my mind that I should not hesitate any longer....

... It is with the profoundest regret that I feel compelled to state that your speech is in places unworthy of a man occupying as high a place as you do in the public life of India. I read your contemptuous reference to the proceedings of the Tripuri Congress with much pain and sorrow. Your reference to Gandhi is a curious combination of respect and contempt. You have wholly misrepresented the object and programme of the Travancore State Congress. I am lost in wonder why and how a man so brilliant and clever as you are should make such wholly unnecessary mistakes...

You say (again): 'The Congress is today and has been recently a battleground for leadership and control of party finances, and party power and it comes to Travancore preaching the policy of independence and interference in the States and asks us to reform politically, I ask, "Physician, heal thyself." If one thing has been made clear more than anything else, it is this that the Indian National Congress can and will maintain its discipline and high ideals in spite of every opposition. The Tripuri Congress at which you might sneered has proved beyond a shadow of doubt that the high ideas of Gandhi of discipline and non-violence stand vindicated more than ever before. Your listeners were your own officers and your military and police. What else could they do not but applaud you? But the world will not applaud you. The public will pass judgment that your eloquence carried you off your feet. Perhaps in quieter moments you will yourself realise that it is not good to play to the gallery so much...'

There was a passage towards the conclusion of your speech which greatly attracted men there was a ring about it which caught my attention. You said, 'I trust that the people of Travancore will realise, that any steps taken to combat Civil Disobedience are not taken in anger or vengeance, but in utter sorrow and only to restore peace and in judging of such measures let them judge justly with sympathy'. Let me, Sir, respectfully take you at your word. I do so in spite of every evidence to the contrary but there are some relentless implications which must stand out clear when such words are uttered. Three implications in the present are (1) that you sincerely wish for peace (2) that you are anxious that the people should not undergo any unnecessary suffering at your hands, specially when you say as you do in another part of your speech that 'it is the duty of Government to cherish and fulfill as far as possible the just aspirations of the people and redress their grievances', and (3) that you are ready to do everything in your power to establish peace by cherishing and fulfilling the just aspirations of the people and redressing their grievances.

Now what are these aspirations and these grievances?

The State Congress has stated them and placed them before you in the plainest language. The people of Travancore want Responsible Government. That is their just aspiration. But in regard to it you make an astonishing statement in another part of your speech, you say, 'The struggle for constitutional reform began in British India over 50 years ago and yet there is no independence in the provinces and certainly not in the Centre. Yet in six months or eight months of agitation the Travancore State Congress wants complete Responsible Government... to be established by means of a six weeks' ultimatum.'

Now, is this an argument that can stand one month's scrutiny? You forget that 50 years of history and the stand behind the basis of the State Congress demand for Responsible Government. That was why only you yourself admitted in your now famous interview with the journalists in Calcutta that the only next step in Travancore can be the grant of full Responsible Government. If this means anything it means that Travancore has progressed so far that the next step should be Responsible Government. That is exactly why the people demand Responsible Government. It is, therefore, meaningless to say that the State Congress should not demand Responsible

Government after an agitation of only eight months. It is astounding that you should have advanced such an argument.

Now what are the grievances? These, too, have been placed before your government most clearly by the State Congress. The State Congress has drawn up a long catalogue of disabilities suffered by numerous people consequent on their previous conviction and imprisonment. The list of these disabilities is a staggering one; if you had exercised some big heartedness these could have been removed long ago. After the most careful study of the facts and without intending to indulge in exaggeration whatever, it has to be admitted that the policy of the Government in dealing with the State Congress has been undoubtedly characterised by vindictiveness and by a clear desire to cripple it and to destroy its organisation and strength. If only you had exercised some elementary generosity and high-handedness in dealing with these disabilities, the present seemingly unbridgeable gulf between your government on the one side and the State Congress on the other would never have existed today. The entire moral responsibility therefore for bringing about the present crises will be placed upon your shoulders by all impartial historians of the future who will write about these present matters. One word, one gesture of sincere conciliation from you would have altered everything and created the goodwill upon which fruitful negotiations for an honourable settlement could have been carried on. A full analysis of all the causes underlying the present tragic situation will show that your ill-will and antipathy towards many of the leaders of the State Congress have blinded your vision and blunted your statesmanship...

Apart from the complex of such personal feelings what are the reasons which impel you to persist in your present policy of unrelenting antagonism to the State Congress? After having most earnestly studied the workings of your mind as revealed in your recent utterances, it seems to me that fundamentally it is the following points which you put forward as the obstacles which prevent you from negotiating with the State Congress for an honourable settlement: (1) Your fear of Christian domination in Travancore under Responsible Government under the present conditions. (2) Your objection to Civil Disobedience as a method for making Government yield to the wishes of the people.

Regarding the first, I have no doubt that your fears are unfounded. I know important Christian leaders who imagine that there will be Hindu or even Nair Domination if full Responsible Government is established immediately. Even if your fears are well-founded, there will not be the slightest difficulty to frame a Responsible Government constitution with such safeguards as to prevent any one community from dominating another. In any case, your attempt to keep the Hindus or a section of them out of the present freedom movement is a great disservice to the cause of Hinduism in Travancore. Do you want it to be said of the Hindu Communities that they stood apart from the freedom movement? If your attempt succeeds and thank God it will not and has not succeeded then the Hindus will be branded as cowards and traitors to the course of freedom by future generation. Thank God the Hindus of all communities have flooded the State Congress. The State Congress is an open book in which every community can write its record of sacrifice and suffering for the common cause of the Motherland. If you are a friend of the Hindus of Travancore you should do nothing to make the record of sacrifice and sufferings of the Hindus an iota less than that of any other community.

Regarding the second point, you no doubt are entitled to your opinion that Civil Disobedience is a crime that should be ruthlessly suppressed. You would even be entitled to say that Civil Disobedience is even more dangerous than violent rebellion and that it should be met by bullets. But you will yourself admit that it is too late in the day in India of today to expect many people to agree with you. The New India of today which faces us with so much courage and confidence and unmarred by any ugly marks of violence is the creation of the discipline of the spirit of sacrifice

called up by the technique of non-violent Civil Disobedience. Bigger men than you have accepted Civil Disobedience. But the nation has accepted it as the one and only alternative to an armed rising and this method of action has come to stay. No doubt it has its risks but can anything be achieved without taking risks? Those who know the realities in India should bless Gandhi for this innocent and mighty weapon which his genius has forged.

The third point is very interesting. You are incensed at what you call outside interference by Gandhi. If Gandhi is an outsider, may I not humbly ask if you are not one yourself. Moreover, you have yourself stated that the Travancore Government has undoubted obligation to an outside authority, which is the Government of India. The objection is, therefore, most certainly not to the outsidedness implied in the matter. The objection is simply that Gandhi has blessed our struggle which you do not like. The talk of outside interference is in another sense also utterly wrong. All the decisions of the State Congress from time to time have been taken entirely on their own responsibility. It is wholly wrong to think that Gandhi is leading the movement, nothing would be more unfair than for anybody to expect Gandhi to lead the movement. His interference has been every time merely to emphasise the uttermost need for non-violence and discipline in our struggle. Every time Gandhi has issued a statement, it is we of the State Congress who have scanned every line of it with fear and trembling, because of the inexorable constitutions of purity, truth and non-violence which he has laid down. I feel confident that when the present dark chapter of the history of Travancore has come to end and the sun of peace and freedom has dawned upon this country, you yourself, Sir, would be compelled by events to acknowledge without reservation Travancore's and your indebtedness to Gandhi for having guided and controlled the freedom movement in Travancore along his inexorable lines of non-violence and discipline.

If you really want peace, you can have peace in Travancore in no time, if only you will act with courage and sincerity. You should also put aside all the personal emotions that move you and remember only the good of Travancore and its people and the absolute need to keep utterly untarnished the great and glorious name of the young sovereign, who rules Travancore today. The State Congress has specially laid down that in their humble opinion in the way of peace, every political prisoner should be released. Every disability consequent on previous convictions or imprisonment should be removed. There should be an impartial enquiry into the shootings. It should not do for you to dismiss contemptuously the demand for an impartial enquiry. If the conduct of Government was right, let an impartial enquiry reveal it. Above all, the State Congress wants that Government should take adequate steps to establish Responsible Government. It is only by taking such steps that you can prove that you do not want repression and that you are anxious for peace. Where does any outside interference come in these matters. The State Congress has placed their demand before you and your Government. Why then raise the bogey of outside interference and cloud the issue?

No one can forget the epoch making Temple Entry Proclamation,¹ which drew the people and the Maharaja into a closer bond of love and loyalty than ever before in the history of Travancore. You implemented that Proclamation with the courage and sincerity that made your name ring across India. Why have you lost the inspiration for the doing of such great deeds? I am one of those who believe that you can do great and good things. The Travancore problem cannot present any insuperable difficulties to one who possesses as you do so much cleverness and ingenuity. But what is wanted is the determination on your part to solve the Travancore problem in a high-minded manner. No one will be more pleased or happier than I, if you would rise above the mists and clouds that surrounds you and if by a supreme act of statesmanship you will bring peace where there is strife and the light of contentment where there is darkness of unfulfilled aspirations. I can only pray that God may grant you the strength and the vision to do so...

There is only one point left to which I should refer. You have indicated in your speech that our duty is to approach the Maharaja for guidance and inspiration and for the solution of our difficulties. You have forgotten that it was exactly this step that the State Congress leaders first wanted to take nearly a year ago. They wanted to submit a memorial to His Highness and authorized the President of the State Congress to apply for an interview with His Highness to place before him the grievances and aspirations of the people. The interview was not granted. The Government proscribed the memorial to His Highness. I trust you will forgive me if I say that the belief is that you interposed yourself between His Highness and his subjects. The State Congress leaders think and with reason that you stand even today between them and their gracious Ruler.

But let the past take care of itself. It is our business to take care of today and the future. While there is yet some time left, therefore, may I appeal to you to rise above all personal considerations and enable the people of Travancore to proceed rapidly and peacefully to the fullest political development under that aegis of the Maharaja. Every other way may be long or short, but they will all lead to prolonged strife and bitterness, the tragic consequences of which none can foretell today.

¹ In November 1936, the Maharaja of Travancore promulgated the epoch making proclamation throwing open all the temples under his control to all classes of Hindus including those hitherto regarded as untouchables.

14. Call for Civil Disobedience

Statement by Pattom Thanu Pillai, on the eve of his arrest, *Hindu*, 20 March 1939, Pattom Thanu Pillai Papers, File No. 5, (newspaper cuttings), NMML.

20 March 1939

'In a few days, the Travancore State Congress will launch on a programme of Civil Disobedience. Those who have studied the course of events in Travancore and the attitude of the Government during the last few months will clearly realise that the State Congress has no other alternative. The way the people respond to the present call of their country will determine its future history. Travancore expects all its citizens, whether within or without, to do their duty in this hour of its trial and need. May I not hope that all those Travancoreans who happen to be outside the State will loyally and patriotically play their part in all possible ways and contribute to the glory and happiness of our dear little State? I am glad that T.T. Titus has undertaken to tour in various parts of India, meet all friends and acquaint them with the real situation in Travancore and solicit their help in the shape of money contributions and otherwise. I hope all friends offer him all possible help'.

15. Read the Signs: Gandhi's Statement to the Press

Harijan, 25 March 1939, and *CWMG*, Vol. 69, pp. 73-75

New Delhi
20 March 1939

I observe that Sir C.P. Ramaswami Aiyar had no better use for the two Travancore stalwarts, Shri Thanu Pillai and Ramachandran, than to send them to prison. They will give a good account of themselves in prison as they have done outside. But I cannot congratulate the Travancore Durbar on their action.

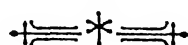
When I was in Rajkot I had seen Sir C.P. Ramaswami Aiyar's statement in condemnation of what he was pleased to term outside interference. May the Princes summon whatever outside assistance they may choose, and not the people? There is no restriction on the outside help the Princes may take. The popular party has put many voluntary restrictions on such help. After all, what am I doing except to give advice as an expert in the science of satyagraha? By doing so I promote the spirit of non-violence and the cause of peace. The connections between the people of the States and of the so-called British India is organic, vital and indissoluble. There is no such connection between the Princes, who are and who pride themselves on being independent of one another. The common tie between them is that of subservience to the Paramount Power, without whose permission, implied or explicit, they cannot move a blade of grass.

But the Paramount Power itself growingly lives on the will of the nation, including the people of the States. If the nation realises that it can develop inclinable strength through truth and non-violence, the Paramount Power will be voluntarily replaced by the power of the people. It, therefore, seems to me that Sir C.P. Ramaswami and those Dewans who think like him are bad advisers of their Princes and ill serve them. The effort to ignore the Congress and Congress workers and to prevent its natural influence working in the States is like that of a child who by the little palm of his right hand tried to stop an onrushing flood. This attempt to stifle that legitimate aspirations of the people of the States surely sows seeds of bitterness on the one hand between the people of the States and their Princes to whom they want to be loyal, and on the other between the Princes and the Congress which wants to help them if it is allowed to do so.

I ask the Princes and their advisers to read the signs of the times and march with them. They may succeed by frightful measures in sending for a time the freedom movement underground, but they will never be able to crush it altogether. I venture to think also that the Paramount Power will have to shed their nervousness and over-cautiousness. If they owe a duty to the Princes, surely they owe an equal duty to their people. The days when the people could be ignored are gone.

If the Princes will not listen, let the Paramount Power tell them in plain terms that they may not expect the latter's assistance in suppressing their people. The Paramount Power who draw Ministers in many provinces from the Congress may not sit still when neighbouring State heap insults upon the Congress. It is an anomaly that demands quick handling.

To the people of Travancore I suggest that the case has benefited by the premature arrests of the two stalwarts. The benefit can only accrue if they will use the arrests wisely. If there is the slightest risk of violence breaking out, let there be no demonstration by way of processions and the like. Let them all devote themselves to constructive work. The date of launching out upon civil disobedience must not be anticipated. If I am to continue to advise, let me study the situation and let them await my opinion before resuming civil disobedience. Civil disobedience is but a minor part of satyagraha. Let the people, including the most illiterate and the down trodden, be knit in a common bond by silent service. In this work even the students can take their due share. Let the satyagrahis remember that haste is waste. Their freedom was assured when they took the solemn vow of fighting for it through truth and non-violence, that is through enlightened and disciplined self-suffering. For I know that they will never go back upon their vow.



16. Suspend Civil Disobedience: Gandhi's Statement
(after final consultation with Travancore friends'
suspending Travancore Satyagraha)

Harijan, 1 April 1939, and *CWMG*, Vol. 69, pp. 78-79

New Delhi
23 March 1939

I have had long chats with Shri Phillipose about the situation in Travancore. I have also carefully studied the resolution of the last Working Committee of the State Congress and the well-thought-out elaborate plan of action to be taken all over Travancore together with great precautions embodied in it to ensure non-violence. I have also read the telegram received by Phillipose wherein he is told that if Civil Disobedience is further suspended, there will be much heartburns and disappointment.

But after having weighed the pros and cons, I have come to the conclusion that it will be in the interest of the cause not to start Civil Disobedience on 25th March and to suspend it till I advise resumption.

In satyagraha there is no such thing as disappointment or heart-burning. The struggle always goes on in some shape or other till the goal is reached. A satyagrahi is indifferent whether it is Civil Disobedience or some other phase of the struggle to which he is called. Nor does he mind if, in the middle of the Civil Disobedience march, he is called upon to halt and do something else. He must have faith that it is all for the best. My own experience hitherto has been that each suspension has found the people better equipped for the fight and for control over forces of violence. Therefore, in advising suspension, I dismiss from my mind the fear that it may lead to desertion and disbelief. If it does, I should not feel sorry, for it would be to me a sign that the deserters did not know what satyagraha was and the movement was better without those who did not know what they were doing.

The reasons that have prompted me to tender this advice are these: If it is true that the Travancore Durbar have drafted untrained raw men as police in order to strike terror among satyagrahis, it behoves the satyagrahis not to tempt the Durbar whilst suspension is a possibility. In view of the inhumanities which I believe have been perpetrated in various states, I am myself thinking out a new orientation of Civil Disobedience. I may fail. But if I am to succeed at all, I must have the quiet which can be produced only by suspension of Civil Disobedience wherever I am guiding it.

This suspension gives me a chance of mobilizing public opinion in favour of the movement of Liberty in Travancore. It gives also an opportunity to the Travancore Durbar to reconsider their views of satyagrahis and their demands.

The Princes are themselves agitated over the tremendous awakening that has taken place among the people in the State. Suspension in Travancore and elsewhere gives them breathing time and an opportunity of thinking out their course of action free from the burden of dealing with civil resistance.

Lastly, it is wise to allow the recent Viceregal message¹ to the Prince to work itself among them.

The Satyagrahis of Travancore should know too that I have advised suspension of Civil Disobedience in Jaipur for similar reasons and I am likewise holding the hands of workers in other States. But I give my assurance to Travancoreans and all concerned that I shall not sit idle during

suspension, nor shall I be long in coming to a final decision, assuming that in the meanwhile no relief has come to the States in which Civil Disobedience was going on and is under suspension.

¹ At the meeting of Chamber of Princes on 14–15 March at New Delhi.

17. Gandhi's lead welcomed in Travancore

Hindu, 24 March 1939

24 March 1939

'Oh yes, I had expected nothing less from the Travancore people', remarked Gandhi, when he received a telegram from the State Congress accepting his advice to suspend Civil Disobedience.

It is generally held here that the Travancore people have won a powerful ally in Gandhiji. The struggle is as good as won if they continue to follow his advice till the end, is the opinion expressed here. Some Princes and their administrators, during their recent visit to Delhi in connection with the Princes' Chamber meeting, privately met Gandhi, when, it is understood, the latter impressed on them the need for speedy redressal of the States' People's grievances.

Asked whether he would visit Travancore, Gandhi said, 'I do not know'. He considered the suspension of satyagraha as one of the lessons of satyagraha. He is determined to spare no effort to bring about a settlement between the Travancore administration and the people...

18. Suspension should Continue

Harijan, 1 April 1939

New Delhi

27 March 1939

Shri Phillipose has received the following telegram from Trivandrum:

'Arrest continue. Kunjukrishna Pillai and other arrested. Kutzitharai Krishna Pillai, President arrested today (24 March). Korah nominated President. Inform Gandhiji'.

I had not expected that arrests would continue even after the suspension of Civil Disobedience. But of course my expectations need not be fulfilled. Suspension was advised reason publicly stated by me. If Travancore authorities consider it necessary to continue arrests, satyagrahis may not complain. Civil Disobedience gives cause for arrest or makes some action by the authorities necessary. Therefore, as a rule, suspension without any previous understanding with the State is generally followed not only by discontinuance of arrests but even by discharge of those convicted for disobedience. If the Trivandrum wire is correct, authorities in Travancore have adopted an unexpected course. Their action need not perturb or perplex satyagrahis. Suspension should still continue. I have no doubt that such arrests will help the popular cause more than if Civil Disobedience was continued, assuming, of course, that there was no cause for arrest other than that the arrested persons were satyagrahis. Since suspension has been declared I hold it to be unnecessary to appoint a President instead of one arrested. The object of appointing successive Presidents in place of those arrested no longer subsists. There must be provision in the ordinary constitution of the State Congress for the conduct of business in the absence of the President.

I am painfully conscious of the fact that satyagrahis were unprepared for the exigency created by my advice. Let them console themselves, if they can, by the fact that though they may not just now appreciate or understand what may to them appear to be a new technique, it had been

advised by one who claims to know the science of satyagrahis. It calls for infinite patience and boundless faith in its efficacy. Everything comes right for those who watch, wait and pray.

Since writing the foregoing, I have seen the official reaction to the suspension. An Associated Press message says that official opinion seems to be that Civil Disobedience is neither given up nor even suspended. If there was any ground for suspension, it should be dispelled by the State Congress second President, Shri N. Shrikrishna Pillai, who, according to another Associated Press message, says: 'Civil Disobedience has been suspended at the instance of Mahatmaji and it will be resumed only with his sanction, whatever time it may take. My instruction to the country is that the State Congress workers would preach the technique of non-violence (as different from non-violent direct action) to the masses as well as the message of khadi and swadeshi. The State Congress, as it stands at present, does not contemplate any direct action without command from Mahatmaji. I know that picketing of liquor shops is not breaking of any law and it is not prohibited by Government. Yet, fearing trouble and misunderstanding, we are not launching even that.' This emphatic statement puts the matter beyond any suspicion. I am hoping that civil resisters who were eagerly looking forward to the resumption of Civil Disobedience will conform to the letter and the spirit of the presidential instructions and thus show that if they understood what 'disobedience' was they understood equally well what 'civil' meant.

I am convinced that much of our trouble has arisen from our not putting due emphasis of our action on the implications of the word 'civil' which is the very opposite of criminal, uncivil and violent. Let the suspension enable the members of the State Congress and the Travancore public in general to realise the tremendous implications of non-violence, and I promise that its practice in thought, word and deed will hasten the progress towards their goal as nothing else will.

19. G. Ramachandran's Statement in Court

Hindu, 27 March 1939, Pattom Thanu Pillai Papers, File No. 5, (Newspaper cuttings), NMML [Statement by G. Ramachandran before the District Magistrate Kottayam when he was arrested with two other State Congress leaders, Pattom Thanu Pillai and P.J. Sebastian under Section 90 CPC. They were asked to furnish securities of Rs 1 lac each on their own and two other securities of similar sums, failing which they would have to undergo simple imprisonment for one year]

27 March 1939

... I wish to state that I am very glad to appear before this court to answer the charges read out to me. This is the second time I appear before a court in Travancore in connection with the present agitation for the establishment of Responsible Government in Travancore. I have no doubt in my mind that the Government are perfectly in the right in having arrested us and put us on our trial before this court. I am one of those who have deliberately and with a full sense of the consequences involved decided that a programme of Civil Disobedience conducted in the most disciplined and non-violent manner has become totally unavoidable to those who seek a radical change in the existing system of Government in this country. The one and only aim of the Travancore State Congress of which I am proud to be a humble member, is the establishment at the earliest possible moment of full Responsible Government in Travancore through peaceful and non-violent means. Even so, I have no doubt that the State Congress would never have decided to start Civil Disobedience except for a certain policy which the Government has followed consistently and relentlessly. That policy has meant the arrest and conviction during the last few months of nearly two hundred political workers under various sections of the law as also the long list of appalling

disabilities which my revered leader has mentioned in his statement today. If this above policy had been kept in abeyance, there would not have been the necessity today for the starting of Civil Disobedience. This I say with a full knowledge of the factors which contributed to the decisions of the State Congress.

It was with the utmost regret and most sincere sorrow that the State Congress decided that the people of Travancore would be called upon to pass through another fiery ordeal of sacrifice and suffering. I wish to place before the Government through this Court this fact most clearly. I wish to state that the leaders of the State Congress have declared their undiluted loyalty to the Maharaja. The leaders of the State Congress are second to none in the whole of Travancore in most sincerely wishing that not one incident should happen in Travancore which would cast the slightest slur on the great and good name of the Maharaja. If, therefore, we felt compelled to ask the people to embark on Civil Disobedience, it was because we truthfully believed and still believe with all the strength of conviction that the present Government and their policy in dealing with the agitation for Responsible Government is one which does not honour the good name of Travancore or its great ruler. I have nothing more to say...

Not being a lawyer and unaccustomed to listen to the kind of evidence that I listened today, your honour would permit me to express my bitter amazement at the evidence furnished. I understand that the police officer who gave evidence swore on the Ramayana, that he had heard nothing regarding Gandhi's statement asking the Travancore State Congress to postpone the commencement of Civil Disobedience and N.S. Krishna Pillai's statement actually postponing the commencement of the Civil Disobedience. This is a matter which fills me with astonishment. Gandhi's statement and N.S. Krishna Pillai's statement deal entirely with the very matter with which we are charged before this Court, and therefore, it is a matter which is very much relevant for us in this case. Every pillar and post in Kottayam should, in my humble opinion, have heard of Gandhi's statement and also of N.S. Krishna Pillai's and yet I had to listen with increasing sorrow and amazement to a responsible police officer who took his oath on the Ramayana that he knew nothing of these. It is a tragedy too deep for tears that such things should happen in this country at a time when so good and gracious a Maharaja as our present ruler is ruling in this country.

20. Travancore State: 'Thoughtless Repression'

Leader, 7 April 1939

*New Delhi
4 April 1939*

In the course of a statement Mahatma Gandhi refers to the telegram received by Mr Phillipose of Travancore who is now in Delhi which inter alia says that while the leaders, who were arrested and imprisoned in anticipation of the contemplated Civil Disobedience, have been released the arrests of others on some pretext or another continue and, what is worse, special police without uniforms is reported to be acting like goondas breaking up meetings by creating rowdyism. Mahatma Gandhi remarks that assuming that the information furnished to him is correct it is a serious reflection on the authorities.

Mahatma Gandhi adds, 'I can only hope that such repression will die out, if only for want of retaliation on the part of the people. Let the workers realise that they have one fruit of civil resistance despite its suspension. They have the privilege of undeserved suffering and if they can undergo it without malice and anger, they will find themselves nearer the goal than hitherto. At least I have no reason for revising my opinion as to the necessity of suspension. Indeed, this thoughtless repression proves the wisdom of suspension.'

21. All Travancore Students Federation

Hindu, 17 May 1939

16 May 1939

Under the auspices of the All-Travancore Student's Federation, a meeting of students was held this evening, under the Presidentship of Mr T.J. Chandy, in the Kidangamparambu *maidan*.

After welcome speech, the President addressed the gathering. He referred, at the outset, to the lathi charge made on students in the Science College compound at Trivandrum last year, which, he said, resulted in the formation of the Students' Federation. He then criticised the repressive policy adopted by the Government towards the students and said that the Federation had no connection whatever either with the State Congress or any other political organisation. Although this was made known to the Dewan, it was deplorable, he said, that he (the Dewan) did not see his way to granting recognition of the Federation by the Travancore University. On the other hand, their President, Secretary and others were arrested and sentenced, and the Conference they had arranged to be held at Trivandrum was banned and the Pandal put up at great expense for the purpose destroyed. Besides these, the entry of Mr K.T. Bhashyam¹ into Travancore, who was to have presided over the Conference, was prohibited. The speaker added that, whatever might happen, they were determined to hold the Conference shortly at Kottayam for which he appealed to the audience and parents to render them all support and help, financial or otherwise.

The President then laid special stress on the urgent need for reducing the school and college fees in the State, so that education should be made accessible to the poor students. He then exhorted the students to do khaddar propaganda, rural uplift work, and carry on mass literacy campaign, and appealed to them to be united and become members of the Federation. He added that they could not remain quiet on agitation until those in prison were set at liberty and their grievances redressed.

The meeting then terminated with a vote of thanks.

¹ A Brahmin lawyer from Bangalore; President, Civil Liberties Union, Madras.

22. State Congress call for boycott of Elections: Resolutions passed by the Travancore State Congress at a meeting held under the presidency of Pattom Thanu Pillai

Hindu, 15 May 1939

15 May 1939

The Working Committee consider it necessary to recall the circumstances under which the 15 seats in the Sri Mulam Assembly and five seats in Sri Chitra State Council were rendered vacant and which have necessitated that ensuing by-election. Nineteen of these seats were held by members of the Travancore State Congress who belonged to the State Congress party in the legislature. The Government, under cover of provision in the electoral rules, unseated them for their conviction during the present political struggle. This provision is that a member of the legislature who had been sentenced to imprisonment for six months or more would become disqualified. But the act also invests the Government with power to remove such disqualification. The conviction, on the basis of which 19 members were disqualified, were, in the case of 18 of them, for disobedience of the high-handed prohibitory orders infringing the fundamental civil liberties and for defying the

Notification under the Criminal Law Amendment Act 1 of 1115, declaring the entire organisation of the State Congress unlawful and in the case of the remaining one for violating the prohibitory order against holding the first All-Travancore Students' Federation at Vattiyurkavu. Another member resigned his seat as a protest against police and military excesses.

...The prohibitory orders and the notification declaring the State Congress unlawful were all utterly autocratic and iniquitous acts in violation of the fundamental civil liberties of the people. If any proof of this fact were needed, it was furnished in the fullest measure by the tens of thousands of the peace-loving people of Travancore coming forward to violate these orders and defy the notification in every taluk and village in the State. Nineteen members of the legislature, by their acts of disobedience of prohibitory orders and the notification, did nothing more than reflect the popular will which rose in an unprecedented volume of protest in spite of the most ruthless repression which raged for months. Within a short period of two months from 10 January 1939 to 7 March 1939 prohibitory orders and that notification became a dead letter and the Government was compelled to beat a retreat by cancelling the notification under the cover of suspending it and releasing hundreds of political prisoners. Though the Government admitted in this manner their mistake, all incidental disabilities in various directions, consequent on conviction were allowed to continue in a spirit of vindictiveness. The unseating of members of the State Congress party in the legislature was part of that policy. It has to be noted that none of these members, though sentenced to long terms of imprisonment, had actually to suffer imprisonment of a minimum period of six months contemplated by the rules, the Government having on their own initiative remitted the sentence within a period of two months in the case of 18 of them and with four months in the case of others. The Government could easily, if only they wanted, have removed the disqualification of these members. The Government, however, chose to do otherwise, for they were moved by the one single intention of crushing the movement for Responsible Government at every turn and at every stage.

The Government have further complicated the situation by ordering a change in the existing system of voting in response to the wishes of a clique which have consistently supported the Government's policy of repression. Though ostensibly to create communal amity and to place the system of voting on a non-communal basis, the change is clearly calculated to have the opposite effect. Nobody, who has any knowledge of the background of communal differences that existed before the arrangement which are now sought to be changed came into force, will be deceived by the Government plea that the change is made with a view to foster communal unity. The State Congress which had anticipated such a move had declared months ago its determined opposition that it would not countenance any change in the system except with the consent of all communities concerned or for purposes of a radical alteration in the present constitution in favour of full Responsible Government, based on adult franchise. But the Government have chosen not merely political situation, consequent on the suspension of Civil Disobedience, to aim another blow at the State Congress. What is most ridiculous is that the already existing members of the Legislative were selected on one system of voting and the present by-elections will take place on another system of voting. Such an anomaly can be understood only when it is remembered that the Government appear to be determined to make use of any stick to give a beating to the State Congress....

In these circumstances, the Working Committee desire to give the people a clear and unambiguous lead in regard to the approaching by-election. The Working Committee calls upon the people and specially voters to effectively and thoroughly boycott the by-elections at every stage and keep away from the polling booths...

23. New Technique in Action

Harijan, 10 June 1939, and *CWMG*, Vol. 69, pp. 422-25*Bombay*
4 June 1939

I have had prolonged conversation with Shri Pattom Thanu Pillai, Shri Verghese and Shri J. Phillipose over the situation in Travancore. My rich experiences in Rajkot show me that civil disobedience in Travancore was suspended in Rajkot that right time. The Rajkot recantation teaches me that it is not enough to have withdrawn the charges against Sir C.P. Ramaswami Aiyar. But it is necessary to recognise that Travancoreans have not only to reckon with the Maharaja, but also with his Dewan. I also observe that several Travancorean critics have asserted that suspension has led to greater repression. These critics do not know that suspension was not advised in order to avoid repression, nor even in expectation of its being stopped. It was advised in order to avoid popular violence, no matter how caused or by whom instigated, if it was instigated. It was also advised in order to avoid brutalisation of human nature. These two objects may be said to have been attained in a fair measure. It was also advised in order to pave the way for an honourable understanding with the authorities and to educate the people in the true way of ahimsa. These objects have still to be worked for. Here my new light, which I seem to see dimly, enables me to tender advice which, but for the light, I would perhaps not have been able to give with as much confidence as now.

I am convinced that direct negotiations should be opened with the authorities. Hitherto the State Congress people have talked at the authorities and the latter at them. The result has been a widening of the gulf between the two. It would not do for a satyagrahi to argue that the approach must be mutual. That assumes the existence of the spirit of satyagraha in the authorities whereas satyagraha is offered in respect of those who make no claim to satyagraha is ever to seek an opportunity for an honourable approach. Now this is impossible so long as the heart is steeled against a belief even in the possibility, let alone advisability, of such approach. And hitherto the impossibility has been unquestionably assumed. I have been a tacit party to it. I now know better. If the leaders have active ahimsa in them, they must cultivate a belief in the perfect possibility and necessity of such approach. And if they have that belief, the way will surely be open to them. In my person, it is well known, I have always acted on that principle.

In making such an approach it would be necessary to lower the key of our note. Our aim must remain what it is, but we must be prepared to negotiate for less than the whole so long as it is unmistakably of the same kind and has in it inherent possibility of expansion. I have found that nowhere, with the only exception of Aundh¹, are the Princes ready to part with all the power in favour of the people. Nor is the Paramount Power anxious for the people in the States to receive full Responsible Government. If I interpret its mind correctly, assuming that an institution can have a mind, it could be sorry if any State of importance copied the example of Aundh. But, what is most important of all, the States' people themselves, as a mass, are nowhere prepared to pay the price. There is no mistaking the awakening that has taken place in the States. But it is not enough for the great purpose to be arranged. It will be well to recognise this fact. In aiming beyond our capacity we are likely to lose all. I would give much to have in all the States a reign of law instead of the reign of a person or persons, however well-meaning they may be. I can then see my ways to build up Responsible Government on that solid foundation. But Responsible Government, which is only a gift without the will and the power of the people behind it, will be a mere paper responsibility, hardly worth the paper on which it may be printed.

The second object of suspension is closely related to the foregoing. If it is a fact that the atmosphere for immediate Responsible Government among the States is not propitious and that the people are not ready to pay the price, it follows that they should have the proper training for it. I am not likely in the near future to advise mass satyagraha anywhere. There is neither adequate training nor discipline among the people. I have not the shadow of a doubt that the people at large should pass one or more positive tests. Mere abstention from physical violence will not answer our purpose. In the center of this programme of positive tests I unhesitatingly put the spinning-wheel and all it means. If there is quick response, this can be a short course. But it may well be a long course if the people do not make an enthusiastic response. I know no other programme than the four-fold constructive programme of 1920. If the people do not take it up whole heartedly, it is proof enough for me that they have no ahimsa in them, or not the ahimsa of my conception, or say they have no confidence in the present leadership. For me there is no other test but what I have ever put before the nation since 1920. The new light tells me that I must not weaken as I have done before in exacting the discipline I have mentioned. I can quite clearly see my way to advise civil disobedience wherever the conditions mentioned are amply fulfilled. That civil disobedience will be individual but in terms of ahimsa far more effective than any mass civil disobedience of the past. I had the sense and humility to retrace my steps whenever I discovered blunders. Hence the nation has gone forward from step to step. But the time has come for a radical change in the direction indicated.

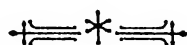
Thus my opinion on Travancore has resolved itself in the enunciation of my present mental condition and its reaction on the Travancore situation.

To sum up: (1) Suspension of mass civil disobedience should be indefinite; (2) there should be the will among the State Congress people to open a way to honourable negotiation with the authorities; (3) there should be no anxiety about those satyagrahis who are in prison or new ones. If the spirit of satyagraha is rightly assimilated, these imprisonments and disabilities should hearten the people; (4) the pitch of the immediate demands should be lowered if necessary, in order to quicken the progress towards the final goal; (5) the condition precedent to any civil disobedience is the fulfillment by the general mass of the constructive programme as a test, if nothing more, of their coming under the discipline of the State Congress.²

It is hardly necessary for me to say that it is open to the workers to reject my advice. They should adopt it only if it appeals to their heads and their hearts and tallies with their own reading of the local situation of which, I own, they must be better judges.

¹ See above, Reforms in Aundh State (Item No. 6, Part X, Chapter 3).

² The Working Committee of the Travancore State Congress, which concluded its two days' session on 11 June adopted a standing resolution that it would be in the interest of the State Congress to accept the advice of Gandhi and that the Committee would assert itself to the utmost to give effect to the decision to proceed with the movement in accordance with the directions given by Gandhi. The resolution stated that 'by declaring its readiness to explore every avenue for an honourable and peaceful solution of the political problem through negotiation.' The Working Committee appointed a committee consisting of P. V. N. Pillai, T.M. Verghese and V.K. Velayudhan to take the necessary steps.



24. Travancore Dewan's Terms to State Congress

Bombay Chronicle, 8 July 1939*Trivandrum*

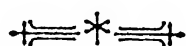
7 July 1939

The President of Travancore State Congress, Mr Pattom Thanu Pillai and the State Congress leaders, Messrs. T.M. Verghese and V.K. Velayudhan, who were appointed as a committee by the Working Committee of the Travancore State Congress to explore avenues of settlement of the Travancore political problem through negotiation, met the Dewan this afternoon at the Dewan's residence. This meeting followed the State Congress President asking for such an interview with the Dewan. The meeting lasted 75 minutes and the Chief Secretary to the Government was also present at the meeting.

It is understood that after preliminary conversation the Dewan indicated his general view of the situation and said that the fixed policy of the Government was that whereas every subject of HH the Maharaja and every Association or body of persons functioning within Travancore and comprising subjects of the Maharaja has the right of approach to the Maharaja and his advisers with regard to any problem political, economical or social, nevertheless, the intervention of outside persons or bodies, however exalted or influential in the affairs of the State or with regard to the conduct of political activities or agitation within the State would not be countenanced. In so far, therefore, as the Travancore State Congress purported to act under the behest of or as representing any outside organisations there would be an almost insuperable difficulty in establishing useful contacts. Notwithstanding their respect of individuals who lead the political life and political agitation in British India, neither they nor organisations which they represented had in the opinion of the Travancore Government any right to function directly as such or give directions or openly guide the policy of political organisations within the State.

The Dewan accepted gladly the assurance by the President of the State Congress that it was not due to any reluctance on the part of the President to make direct approach that the Government were not addressed earlier in this matter. The Dewan further emphasized that, as it had now been admitted by many eminent men, who guided the political destinies of several British Indian Provinces, if Civil Disobedience continued the Government would be compelled to take all such steps as were necessary to keep law and order. Unless the State Congress definitely gave up any idea of Civil Disobedience as a weapon to be resorted to for the purpose of attaining political and constitutional ends, the negotiations would lead nowhere. On that point there could be no compromise and no weakening. Subject to those conditions there could not only be no objection by the State, but everything in favour of full and completely unreserved discussions with a view to a happy mutual settlement of all matters in controversy between any section of the people and the Government so as to lead to the initiation of those steps, which conducted to cordial relations between the Government and the subject of His Highness and attainment by the latter of legitimate, practicable, economic and political ideals.

Following this indication of federal policy by the Dewan there was a full and frank discussion with regard to certain political and constitutional matters and demands of the State Congress regarding the political programme to be pursued by the State. There will be another meeting in a few days between these State Congress leaders and the Dewan



25. On Prospects of Direct Action

E.M.S. Namboodiripad to Jayaprakash Narayan, 20 July 1939, JP Papers, NMML
[Extracts of a letter dated 20 July 1939 from E.M. Sankaran Namboodiripad, Calicut, to Jayaprakash Narayan, Congress Socialist Party, Patna. The letter was intercepted and sent with a biographical note by the Dewan, Travancore, to Colonel Murphy, Resident Madras States. Namboodiripad was described as taking an active part in Congress Socialist, Labour and Peasant Conference in Kerala. Government of Travancore Confidential Section, File No. 376, 1939]

not dated

You are probably aware that people in Travancore are quite dissatisfied with Gandhi's attitude to the States. A section of them is under the political lead of A.K. Pillai, Bar-at-Law (Royist) while the Forward Bloc tendency is also rising. A Travancore Forward Bloc Conference is being arranged to help out Travancore under the Presidentship of Subhas Babu. It has already taken a definite shape. They seem to be pressing for immediate launching of Direct Action, which we believe is most ill-advised. With State Congress leadership demoralized, with youth leaguers clapped in jails, with Gandhi speaking in terms of negotiation, with a number of mass trials of labour and league workers being carried, a struggle now launched will end in turning the present hell into a complete rout. We feel what is necessary is (1) carry on organizational work with a view to defend the workers now being proceeded against, (2) form groups of militant political workers and educate them politically, (3) through them strengthen the State Congress, and (4) keep the flag of Responsible Government flying. The object of the above step is to keep the fire of the militancy flying in the innumerable forces that were released during the last struggle. Pillai is meeting the workers and working to this end. He is also likely to attend the Forward Bloc Conference and try to make it accept the above programme.

I would like to have an early reply from you.

26. The Dewan's Defiance

Hindu, 1 August 1939

30 July 1939

'It is the declared policy of Travancore to run its administration without outside dictation and it will see that no interference by outside bodies is tolerated or encouraged within the State', said Sir C.P. Ramaswami Aiyar, Dewan-President, Travancore Legislative Assembly, this morning, in ruling out order an adjournment motion sought to be moved by a non-official member, Mr M.L. Janardhanan Pillai, with a view to discussing the recent statement in the Harijan by Mr Gandhi 'that there should be no such thing as a policy of non-interference by the Paramount Power and that there should be a change in the manners of all parties towards interference of the Congress in Indian States.'

The Dewan-President said: 'The demand made on behalf of some groups of the Indian National Congress that they should have a controlling voice in the internal affairs of Indian States is by no means a recent matter. It is a perfectly natural attitude, because if it be considered that Federation is a pressing problem or is expected, hoped or feared to emerge very shortly and if it is remembered that the lower Federal House will consist of 375 members of whom 125 belonging to the States, and 250 to British India and that out of the 250 members Muslims are 83, it is obvious that the Congress cannot form a ministry or control Federation unless they have either the Muslims or

Indian State on their side. Naturally it is the political task as well as preoccupation of the Congress to get Indian States on their side or under their control, and it is natural for a powerful political body like Congress to intervene in the internal affairs of Indian State and build up their own organisation within the States. If members of this House were in the position of the Congress, they will probably do the same thing.'

'At the same time, it is the declared policy of the State to run its own administration without outside dictation and they will see that no interference by outside bodies is tolerated or encouraged within the State. All these currents and cross-currents have been in operation for some years, although in recent months they witnessed their intensification. Therefore, it does not raise a topic of recent urgent importance.'

27. Travancore State Congress Conference

Indian Express, 11 September 1939

11 September 1939

The first annual session of the Travancore State Congress Conference concluded in the early hours of this morning (8th September) at Karunagapalli, under the presidency of Pattom Thanu Pillai, President of the State Congress.

The Conference resolved that the immediate programme of the State Congress should be: (1) intense systematic and countrywide propaganda for educating the people on the issue of Responsible Government; (2) the strengthening of the State Congress organisation throughout the State and putting it on a self-reliant and permanent foundation; (3) real and effective mass contact through a carefully planned constructive programme emphasizing a mass literacy campaign, khadi, swadeshi, and prohibition; (4) establishment of a permanent volunteer and Desh Sevika Service; and (5) opening of centers or camps for minimum period of training for workers in the various programmes outlined...

The Conference, after a long discussion, ratified the action taken by the Working Committee in appointing a deputation to approach the Dewan to discuss the question of constitutional reforms and other matters between the State Congress and the Government and also the position adopted by the deputation in regard to the condition laid down by the Dewan as preliminary to the consideration of any scheme of constitutional reforms.

The Conference set out the position adopted by the deputation and ratified by the Conference, as follows:

The State Congress is an independent organisation not subordinate to any outside organisation. The responsibility for its leadership and programme rests on its executive, the Working Committee. The State Congress will have the unfettered right to consult and accept guidance from any individual or organisation outside the State. But the State Congress will not be bound to carry out any except its own decisions. At no stage during the present negotiations with Government will any outside guidance obtrude as such into the negotiations to cause any embarrassment to Government, because such consultations and acceptance of any guidance will be wholly a matter between the State Congress and those consulted. Even when consultations have taken place or guidance accepted, any programme of work consequent on them will be undertaken only under the leadership and on the responsibility of the State Congress executive. There will be no question of any direct outside leadership inside Travancore.

The position is that the State Congress has suspended civil disobedience indefinitely and unconditionally and has no programme of civil disobedience in view. The State Congress is anxious

in the present negotiations to work towards a position wherein civil disobedience will become wholly unnecessary and its anxiety in that direction is sincere and not to be doubted.

The State Congress will always hold on the goal of Responsible Government and will always have the undoubted right to agitate constitutionally for the same. But this does not prevent the State Congress from exploring the possibilities of any scheme put forward by Government or even accepting any scheme which the State Congress may think may be worked at present for what it is worth. The State Congress will have the right to reject any scheme that might be hammered into shape by mutual consultations and an agreement will be loyally worked by the State Congress, keeping in view the goal of Responsible Government. No scheme shall be deemed to have been agreed upon and accepted until it has received the assent of the general body of the State Congress.

The Conference placed on record its regret that though civil disobedience was suspended nearly six months ago 'indefinitely and unconditionally, the Government have not released the large number of political prisoners nor removed the grave disabilities which they have imposed on numerous citizens consequent on participation in the freedom movements.' The conference was emphatically of opinion that a general amnesty was essential for a satisfactory solution of the matters in controversy between the State Congress and Government.

28. Unfortunate People of Travancore

Harijan, 7 October 1939, and *CWMG*, Vol. 70, pp. 225-28

New Delhi
2 October 1939

An evil fate seems to dog the career of the people of Travancore in so far as they are represented by the State Congress. The Congress is composed of some of its bravest and most self-sacrificing men. But unfortunately there never have been happy relations between them and the able Dewan of the State. The charge brought against him by the Congress in the preliminary stages of the movement for Responsible Government somehow or other acerbated the relations. The framers of the charges, as I happen to know from personal conversations with them, honestly believed in them. But when I reasoned with them that they were bound to withdraw them if their cause was the attainment of Responsible Government, and not the removal of the Dewan—a case in which India could not be interested—they saw the wisdom of my advice and promptly acted upon it. This cleared the ground for them and made their case unassailable. But I feel that the statement created by the charges between the Dewan and the leaders has persisted. I wish it had been otherwise, though civil disobedience has been discontinued and personal talks between the Dewan and the leaders have taken place, cordiality between them has been lacking. On the contrary there has been a ring of distrust about their talks. The Dewan has kept himself at a sage distance from the leaders. Negotiations after a struggle are generally preceded by discharge of prisoners and withdrawal of prosecution^s and removal of other disabilities. In Travancore these things have not happened. Cancellation of lawyers' sanads and suspensions of elected member of the Assembly remain. In fact there is not much sign of an advance by the State towards the leaders. And now comes like a bombshell suspension of negotiations for political reform. These are the words of the Travancore communiqué:

'For reasons which must be obvious and which have, for instance, influenced the Government of India in their decision regarding the Federal negotiations, no conversations can possibly take place regarding any constitutional reforms until normal constitutions are restored and the position is stabilized.'

This is followed by the following minatory warning:

'With reference to the statement to the Press issued by the President of the Travancore State Congress and his letter to the Dewan, Government wish to point out that while they do not intend to curb or put a check upon ordinary activities of political organisations and while their ideas are unaltered as to consultations with political organisations and leaders as soon as conditions permit, they cannot possibly allow an organised scheme of agitation to be conducted at this juncture, in view of the present situation and especially the likelihood of increased unemployment owing to war conditions and the public excitement that may be caused by the situation regarding foodstuffs and other commodities. Such a scheme of agitations is bound to give rise to serious repercussions and results, and the Government, who have a duty to protect the law-abiding inhabitants of the State, cannot possibly take the risks involved thereby nor can they at present devote any attention to questions relating to constitutional demands. Government desire to warn the Travancore State Congress and other organisations with similar programme that they will be forced to take steps both under the ordinary law and under the Defence of Travancore Proclamations and Rules for maintaining normal conditions and peaceful atmosphere in the state'.

The reason for suspension of contemplated reform is wholly unconvincing. So far as I know in no State has such suspension been thought necessary. Indeed I venture to suggest that the offer of the States of British Government lacks the spirit assumed to be behind the aims of the Allies, viz., the saving of democracy for the world. The States' offer to be consistent with the time spirit has to carry with it the will and the cooperation of their people. This is clearly impossible if the people of the States do not feel that they are partners with the Princes in the administration of the States. Viewed in this light, the grant to the people of the greatest measure of responsibility consistent with their own safety becomes a first and a first-class war measure so far as the States are concerned. And who will say that the people of Travancore, where education has for years been given to the people on a liberal scale, are not ready for shouldering the burden of managing their own affairs? The responsibility in large States can mean no more than that of a big corporation in the Provinces. This suspension of political advance in Travancore on the ground of war comes as a shock and a surprise. What connection political reform in the States has with the suspension of Federation is not ready to understand. But for the opposition of the Princes, the Muslim League and the Congress Federation would have come along; and I make bold to say that the British Government would gladly bring it in today if the three parties desire it. Political reform in the States is overdue and has to come irrespective of Federation.

I mean no offence to the Princes when I say that generally speaking they may in a sense be compared to Herr Hitler. The difference is that they have not his dash, energy, resourcefulness and capacity. Every one of the Princes has the powers of absolute autocrats, and they have times without number exercised such powers. In their own sphere they enjoy powers which the British monarchs have not possessed for centuries. The present British King is merely the first citizen of his country. He cannot arrest a single person at his mere wish. He cannot administer corporal punishment to a single person without coming like any other citizen under the law of the State. This severe limitation on the British monarchy is rightly the envy of the world. But every Indian Prince is a Hitler in his own State. He can shoot his people without coming under any law. Hitler enjoys no greater powers. If I am not mistaken, the German Constitution does impose some limits on the future. Great Britain's position as the self-constituted guardian of democracy is compromised so long as it has more than 500 autocrats as its allies. The Princes will render Great Britain a real service when they can offer their services not as so many autocrats but as true representatives of their people. I venture, therefore, to suggest to Sir C.P. Ramaswami Aiyar, the distinguished constitutional lawyer that he has ill served the people and the Prince of Travancore and the British Government by suspending political reform and threatening the State Congress with dire

consequences if it dares to carry on the contemplated agitation for political advance during these times.

29. Responsible Government Day

Press Note issued by the Travancore Government, *Hindustan Times*, 1 November 1939

1 November 1939

In the communiqué issued on 23 September, the Travancore Government pointed out that they cannot permit an organised scheme of agitation at this juncture in view of the present situation and industrial and economic position of the people who were affected by the adverse conditions produced by war in a country so dependent on imports and exports as Travancore. They gave warning that such a scheme of agitation was bound to give rise to serious repercussions and the Government, who have the duty to protect law-abiding citizens of the State, would be forced to take all necessary steps for maintaining normal conditions.

The Travancore State Congress has now arranged for holding public meetings on 8, 16 and 24 of every month, the three days being styled as Civil Liberties Day, Responsible Government Day and Political Prisoners' Day, respectively. Volunteer rallies, opening of training camps and what is called organisation work are also contemplated. It is noted that these demonstrations are timed to begin on the day preceding the commencement of functions in celebration of the birthday of the Maharaja.

All persons are hereby warned not to take part in these demonstrations or rallies, and against attempts by means of pamphlets, leaflets, etc. to inflame public opinion and promote agitation and unrest. Persons organising or taking part in such an agitation and demonstrations are liable to be dealt with under the Defence of Travancore Proclamation and Rules without further notice.

30. Responsible Government Day

Hindu, 5 November 1939

4 November 1939

Mr V.K. Velayudhan, second President of the Travancore State Congress, has issued the following statement to the press:

'Mr Pattom A. Thanu Pillai, President of the Travancore State Congress, has been arrested along with several other State Congress leaders. A few volunteers were also arrested while distributing leaflets announcing a public meeting in Trivandrum to observe Responsible Government Day.'

'API version that these volunteers were carrying and distributing leaflets containing revolutionary and communist literature is not true and I hasten to repudiate it.'

'Looking beyond Travancore, we see that, in spite of the international situation, steps are being taken in several Indian States to meet the demands of the people for constitutional advancement. In Rajkot, reforms have already been announced. In Mysore, it is expected very shortly. In Limbdi and some other States, reforms are reported to be under contemplation. Taking into account the high standard of education and political advancement in Travancore, conditions for the introduction of Responsible Government are most favourable. I may recall the Calcutta Statement of Sir C.P. Ramaswami Aiyar that the next step of constitutional reforms in Travancore is full Responsible Government. Under these circumstances, it is unfortunate that the Government has taken the unwise step of precipitating matters once again.'

'To agitate along constitutional lines for the establishment of Responsible Government is a fundamental civil right, and any government seeking to obstruct it through repression and harassing even a peaceful and constitutional agitation would stand condemned. The Travancore Government has thus egregiously blundered in initiating another area of repression, but whatever may be the extent of repression that may be brought to bear on the people, I am sure that the freedom loving people of Travancore could stand bravely wedded to the goal of Responsible Government and never swerve from the path of non-violence.'

'Now that the entire press in Travancore in virtually gagged, wild and fantastic rumours of occurrences may gain currency in the country. I would warn the public to be very wary under these circumstances. Nevertheless, the Government would be wholly responsible for any consequence arising out of such rumours spreading in the country. I appeal to my brothers and sisters to rally round the banner of the State Congress and carry on agitation towards the cherished goal. The All-Travancore Congress Committee has placed a programme of constitutional agitation before the country, and I hope that in its endeavours to carry through this programme of the State Congress it would receive the heartiest cooperation and overwhelming support of the public. I earnestly appeal to people to be calm and restrained even in the face of gravest provocation. Remember that non-violence is our sheet-anchor.'

31. Travancore Again

Harijan, 11 November 1939, and *CWMG*, Vol. 70, pp. 329-30

Segaon
6 November 1939

'There was a forced lull in Travancore after the acceptance by the State Congress of my advice to suspend Civil Disobedience but this seems to have gone from bad to worse. The inactivity of the State Congress was perhaps mistaken for fatigue or worse. I knew that the State Congress leaders were being held down by me. Their loyalty was great. But when the other day a deputation came to me and asked me whether, in order to avoid Civil Disobedience, they were to stop even ordinary activity which one knows as political, I told them that even that severe restraint might be part of the people's training. But I also told them that I could not judge for them in such matters. I could not have the data they had. They could not help me in judging the atmosphere in Travancore. Physical presence there was necessary to enable me to judge. No second hand evidence could be of much assistance, at least not to me. I told them, therefore, that they must judge for themselves, irrespective of my opinion. For I was not prepared to take the risk of curbing even harmless political activity for fear of imaginary consequences. The leaders should, therefore, consider themselves free from any restraint from me....'

In my opinion the State Congress had every right to dissociate themselves from the glorification of the Dewan's administration.¹ Even an adversary is entitled to many happy returns of the day. But it is another matter when an attempt is made as it is said to have been made in the present case, to make political capital out of an innocent event like a birthday. The first resolution is a protest against such political use of the Dewan's birthday.

The second resolution has nothing controversial about it. It is a mere assertion of the right to hold public meetings, etc.

News has now been received that Shri Thanu Pillai, Shri Phillipose and three others were arrested on the 2nd instant and that the State Congress office was taken possession of by the Travancore Government. Furniture, it is said, was thrown out.

The polity of the Travancore Government is ununderstandable. The repression seems to me to be wholly unjustifiable. It is wrong to put the best and wisest citizens in jail. I know that those who have been arrested are sincere, devoted and able workers.

I can send no better consolation to the Travancore State Congress workers than that those who go to jail should do so joyously and with the determination to serve the whole period of imprisonment. I have no doubt that it is the surest way to Swaraj if those who are imprisoned possess pure hearts.

¹ The decision was to boycott the 61st birthday of C.P. Ramaswamy Aiyar. The Dewan reacted sharply. 'There are some persons', he stated, 'who too often look at Travancore through coloured spectacles. One of them is Mahatma Gandhi.'

32. Police Excesses and the Travancore State Congress:

Statement by C.C. Niroth, President of the
Travancore State Congress

Bombay Chronicle, 4 December 1939

4 December 1939

With the arrest at Travancore of Rosamma Cherian,¹ who has nominated me as her successor, the responsibilities of leading the State Congress have developed upon my shoulders. My first duty is, of course, to heartily congratulate the people and my coworkers in particular, in all parts of the country on the courage and fortitude with which they have successfully organised and conducted the Civil Liberties Day in the face of excesses by the police. It is a matter of extreme gratification that in the teeth of great provocation the people behaved themselves in the most non-violent manner.

The rousing reception accorded to Cherian... and the huge meetings held at numerous places on the Civil Liberties Day, inspite of threats, intimidation and lathi-charges, clearly indicate the firm determination of the people to achieve Responsible Government and give the lie direct to the pompous declaration of the Dewan that the State Congress leaders are 'folks without a following'.

Why the Government have lost their balance on the innocuous and legitimate decision of the Travancore State Congress to carry on constitutional agitation for Responsible Government seems to me quite inexplicable. To disregard the warning in a Press Communique issued by the Government is no offence under existing laws. The State Congress is not declared an illegal organisation. Yet leaders and workers of the organisation are arrested in large numbers. Some are under detention without trial probably as enemies of the State; many are proceeded against under the much abused Section 20 CrPC (Security Section) and cloud of mystery is cast over the places and conditions of their confinement.

I have been getting reports that the treatment meted out to these prisoners, particularly in Travancore lock-ups, is none too enviable. Organisers of meetings are arrested in the morning and let off late in the night, subjecting them to insults and injuries while under custody. The venue of the meetings are taken possession of by the special police, hours before the time of the meetings, and all approach roads are blocked by the police. The crowds that gather in spite of such instructions are subjected to assaults and even lathi-charges. K. Kesavan, P.G. Verghese, and M.G. Koshi² were paraded in the loin cloths in the streets of Quilon during heavy rains without any umbrella.

I now reliably learn that here in Alleppey early in the morning of 25th November, E. John Phillipose and K.A. Gangadhara Menon, who had been removed from the Nagercoil 'Concentration

Camp', were most unmannerly abused and pushed by the neck by some constables and that all political prisoners at Alleppey went on hunger-strike for a day as a protest. It is disquieting news that Cherian is kept in a police lock-up in the Travancore town even though there is a separate ward for undertrial women in Central Prison close by. May I ask C.P. Ramaswamy Iyer whether these are not instances of 'hitting below the belt' on which he was recently waxing so eloquent...

¹ Miss Rosamma Cherian, President of State Congress was arrested when she visited Trivandrum in bid to organise State Congress meeting. She was prosecuted for inviting and publishing a seditious pamphlet entitled 'An appeal to women folk of Travancore'. This was reported by Chief Secretary to Government, District Magistrate on 24 November 1939

² Member of Quilon Bar.

Chapter 4. Kisan Movement

I. FIRST QUARTER OF 1939

1. Swami Sahajanand on Gujarat Kisans (from *Kisan Bulletin*)

National Front, 1 January 1939

... Swami Sahajanand, President, All India Kisan Sabha summarized his impressions of his recent tour in Gujarat in the following terms:—

‘After full ten months I revisited Gujarat on the 17th December and completed my tour on the 24th evening covering four out of its five districts. Last time just before the Haripura Session of the Congress I could tour round Surat and Panchmahal districts only....’

‘I found the entire atmosphere changed now. All the meetings were well-attended and I found a ready and spontaneous response in the Kisans and Halis of Gujarat to the call of the Kisan Sabha workers and there was evident a natural urge in them to join the Kisan Sabha which they have begun to realize and count as their own....’

‘I found from a Kisan song of the Raniparaj people that they have full faith in the Kisan Sabha and believe that it will free them from their bondage. Smiling faces of these Raniparaj men, women and children who rallied at Pardy in Mandvi Taluka, more than five thousand in number, to hear us convinced me that a golden future lay ahead of the Kisan movement. I cannot forget the moving scenes of the 18th December when hundreds of Raniparaj and Dubla men and women and girls ran after our cart on a six mile route to Paradi....’

‘...The Kisan Sabha in Gujarat has appeared in a militant form from its very inception as the circumstances had left no alternative for our workers here, and as the Kisans were, it seems feeling the necessity of some such fighting organ of theirs so they have been and are being naturally drawn into it....’

‘...I am confident within a year the entire countryside of Gujarat will be electrified by the Kisan Sabha Movement.’

2. (a) Zamindar–Kisan Relations in Gorakhpur, an Article by Dr Vishwanath Mukherji

Sangharsh, 1 January 1939

After the Congress accession to power the atrocities of the zamindars of Gorakhpur are increasing beyond limits. Though the situation is not so concerning in the other tehsils of Gorakhpur in

comparison to Maharajganj, yet there could be no two opinions that the situation is growing serious in other tehsils by and by.

There have been atrocities galore on the *kashtkars* of the villages of Gulharia Saraiyan and Jhuginyan near Piggaich and Bhathat Bazaar in the sadar tehsil. The atrocities relate to forceful occupation by the zamindars of the lands of those *kisans* who have been in possession of these for years and are registered in the records of the *patwari* as *khudkasht* of the zamindars: it is seen that in most villages of the sadar tehsil hundreds and thousands of *bighas* of land are recorded in the name of the zamindars. In the Vijahara village near the Kusamhi village about 700 *bighas* are recorded in the name of the zamindars. Very little land, not enough for the upkeep of their family, is in the possession of the *kashtkars* of these villages. Therefore their conditions have become worrisome. They hew wood from the nearby jungles and sell them in the bazaar for their livelihood. This is one example of many such villages in the sadar tehsil.

Atrocities of Zamindars

In the tehsil of Bansgaon there are mostly small zamindars. Here there have been more atrocities than in the sadar tehsil. In the Tenua village near Koraram, the zamindar with *nine-anna* share has committed so much atrocity and continues to do so beyond limits. On invitation from the *kisans* I myself went there and investigated. I drew the attention of the Collector and the Superintendent of Police but no appropriate action was taken. It appears that the police are totally independent in the tehsil and it would not be inappropriate to say that the police did not care at all about the problems of the *kashtkars*. In the Nare village of the same tehsil, zamindars looted the poor and helpless *kisans* in broad daylight and attempted to kill the *kisans* and Congress workers. They saved their lives by hiding in a house. Not all such incidents can be reported in the newspapers soon enough. But I want to make it clear that nowadays zamindars are committing excesses openly.

Kisans inveigled by Agents

In the tehsils of Hata and Padrauna, the behaviour of the zamindars towards the *kisans* is highly inappropriate. Here wrong entries by *patwaris* are often to be seen. In the nearby villages of the tehsils of Hata, Pakoli, Ramkila, Khatta, Padrauna, one has a good opportunity to witness the excesses of the zamindars. I believe that if an independent enquiry is conducted, many true incidents related to the atrocities of zamindars will be found. Incidents have also occurred where the *kashtkars* have been seen occupying the land of the zamindar. But in this connection it is to be kept in mind that it is because of their illiteracy, poverty and other reasons. Inveigled by the agents of the village, the *kashtkars* indulge in rioting and litigation and thus harm themselves.

Doings of *patwaris*

The *patwari* has great opportunity to make wrong entries. He appears to be independent in this district and makes changes in the records according to his wish. I find many examples of wrong entries by *patwaris* in the office of the *kisan sabha* and on visits to villages. The *patwari* never gives to the *kashtkar* the appropriate *intekhab* of his land but always asks for bribe. Thousands of such examples are there. Investigations have revealed that many a *patwari* is on the pay roll of the zamindars and makes changes in the official records in accordance with their wish. This means that the *patwari* is at the root of all quarrels. It is very easy for the *patwari* to transfer one *kashtkar's* land in the name of the other. The *patwari* records such fields as are in the possession of the *kashtkar* as the zamindar's *khudkasht*. In collusion with the zamindar the *patwari* takes the thumb impression of the illiterate *kisan* on a blank paper and the result is that the blank paper is considered

as resignation of his land by the *kisan*. Accordingly that *kashtkar* loses his possession over his fields. Likewise the *patwari* indulges in hundreds of frauds that are impossible to describe here.

Receipt for Rent

It is a matter of great pain that the zamindar does not give receipt for the *lagaan* to his *kashtkar*. The zamindars are not known to give the proper printed receipt. The men of the tehsil zamindars make the collection and appropriate the money without the knowledge of their masters. The result is that the *kisan* is charged with non-payment of *lagaan* and his entire property is attached. This kind of ill appropriation is spread over the whole district. On investigation of such cases it will be found that because of the excesses of the zamindars many *kisans* have become poor and continue to become so. The zamindar-kisan reconciliatory board whose head is the District Collector has been of no use. Even now labour is paid two, three, four *paise* and if the *kashtkars* refuse they are misbehaved with. This is the reason that in every part of the district riots occurred and are taking place. If the labour is paid appropriately then there will be fewer chances of fights and quarrels.

New Law of Tenancy

The new law that the Congress Government is going to pass is to fulfill the promises made to the *kashtkars* by the Congressmen during the elections. A great deal of change is necessary in the current law regarding the land cultivated by landowner, as this is the cause of friction between the zamindar and the *kashtkar*. It is clear that so long as the zamindar does not give a proper printed receipt to the *kashtkar* and extract forced labour from them, so long as this type of *patwaris* will exist and so long as the zamindars do not stop forcibly occupying the land of the *kashtkars*, the Congress Government, which means well by the *kisans*, will not be able to do any good to them. I will also pray to those high thinking among the zamindar brethren not to indulge in vile propaganda against their illiterate *kashtkars* who are too poor to get help from newspapers like the *Pioneer* to express their miserable conditions before the public. It is hoped that during the Congress regime the *kisans* will attain the status of humanity in the society, and having been educated will improve their condition.

(b) Nadirshahi of the Zamindars, Increasing Oppressions of Patwaris: Provincial Government Pay Attention

Sangharsh, 8 January 1939

Shri Shyam Sunder Pandey, Secretary, Mandal Yuvak Sangh, Debari, District Azamgarh writes that in this village, the leading Zamindar is Munshi Ehtasham Ali, a rich man of Lucknow. In his zamindari, oppression is rampant. Poor peasants, who were already in distress due to floods during the past four consecutive years have to pay all sorts of bribes. In view of the proposed land revenue legislation, attempts have been made to evict the peasants from the lands which they have been cultivating for more than five years but these attempts did not succeed because of the resistance by peasant activists (volunteers). This conflict has been going on since the month of *Chait*. In his zamindari, about 2000 *bighas* of land is claimed to be *khudkasht* (self-cultivated) which he has actually never cultivated. He has only 14 bullocks but, in collusion with the Patwari, poor peasants' lands which they have been cultivating from the beginning are recorded as *khudkasht*.

Dr Vishwanath Mukherji, MLA, President Mazdoor Kisan Sabha (Gorakhpur), Pt Uma Shankar Mishra, Secretary, District Kisan Sangh (Azamgarh), Shri Shiv Ram Rai, Inspector, District Congress Committee (Azamgarh), Paramhans Baba Raghav Das (Gorakhpur), Pt Algu Rai Shastri, MLA,

Shri Sitaramji Ashthana, MLA, President, District Congress Committee (Azamgarh) etc. have already visited the place. All these patriots have represented the state of affairs prevailing here before the Government of the Province. Resolutions have been unanimously passed at every meeting demanding the appointment of an enquiry officer to correct the false entries which have been made in the records. But these resolutions, it appears, are being consigned by the Government to the waste paper basket. Since the month of *kartik*, three peasant activists—Shri Mangal Dev Pandey, Shri Gorakh Nath Shukla and Ram Sunder Pandey—and another eleven peasants are being prosecuted under section 379. In the month of *sawan* a group of peasants had gone to meet the District Magistrate to relate to him their tale of woe. The Magistrate assured them that the atrocities of the Zamindars would be put to an end. After five months the Magistrate came to Thana Madhuban which is at a distance of about ten miles from this village. So, in accordance with the assurance given to them, the peasants who were restless because of the atrocities perpetrated against them, went to meet him. But leave aside putting an end to the atrocities, it is said, the *darogha* was given orders to prosecute under Section 107 any peasant who tried to narrate his suffering. An order to this effect was given in the case of one volunteer Shri Dwarika Pandey and as a result there has been an increase in the atrocities against peasants. Pt Algu Rai Shastri, the local MLA, has reportedly appealed to the Government to appoint an enquiry officer but so far nothing has been done. Peasants are not likely to benefit from the new legislation when it is passed unless and until an enquiry officer is appointed.

We appeal to the Government of the United Provinces and the Congress organisation to kindly appoint an enquiry officer for this region soon.

3. Swami Sahajanand in Bombay

Sahajanand tours Bombay, File No. 800 (53) BIV, 1939, Home Dept. (Special), Government of Bombay, Maharashtra State Archives

6 January 1939

Swami Sahajanand, President of the All India Kisan Sabha, arrived in Bombay on the morning of 25th December. He was given a public reception at a joint meeting held at the Kamgar Maidan, by the Bombay Provincial Trade Union Congress and Bombay Girmi Kamgar Union (Red Flag), in the evening under the presidentship of Sadu Piraji Bhise. About 4,000 persons attended.

Jamaluddin Bukhari, S.S. Mirajkar, Indulal Yajnik, K.N. Joglekar, S.G. Patkar, S.G. Tambitkar, Amir Haider Khan, Ajoy Kumar Ghosh, M. Shahid, Dr G.D. Adhikari, Mrs Ushabai Dange, S.S. Batliwalla, Mrs Ambutai Joglekar, S.V. Deshpande, Miss Batliwalla and R.K. Bhogale were among those present.

The following placards in Marathi and Hindi were exhibited:

1. Prepare for a General Strike.
2. Victory to the Workers' Unity.
3. Lift the ban on the Communist Party of India.
4. Destroy Japanese Imperialism.
5. Strengthen the Union.

Photos of Lenin were sold at half an anna each.

The proceedings of the meeting commences with the singing of a song of the Russian Revolution and shouts of *Inquilab Zindabad*.

S.P. Bhise, S.S. Mirajkar, K.N. Joglekar, S.G. Patkar, Jamaluddin Bukhari and Indulal Yajnik made speeches eulogising the services rendered by Swami Sahajanand in the cause of the peasants in Bihar and in favour of establishing a Workers' and Peasants' Raj in India.

In the course of his reply, Swami Sahajanand thanked the workers of Bombay and assured the Congress of the full support of the workers and peasants in the event of its declaring war against British imperialism. He pointed out that if the Congress Ministers failed to abide by their pledges, the masses would not allow them to rest. He appealed to the members of the audience to keep the question of the untouchables in the forefront remarking that those who were oppressed today would lead them in revolution in the future.

Swami Sahajanand was similarly received by the Independent Labour Party at a public meeting held at the Naigaum Maidan the same evening, under the presidentship of Dr B.R. Ambedkar. About 2,000 persons attended. Dr B.R. Ambedkar, D.V. Pradhan and M.V. Donde made speeches eulogizing Swami Sahajanand's services and exhorting the workers to vote for candidates of the Independent Labour Party at the ensuing Municipal elections, Swami Sahajanand, in reply, spoke on the awakening and class-consciousness of the masses of India.

4. The 'Tanka' Movement

National Front, 8 January 1939

The long-suffering peasant of every part of Bengal is gradually shaking off his age-long indifference to the most brutal forms of exploitation to which he has hitherto been the victim.

Of such a nature is the 'tanka' system of exploitation which has given rise to a peasant struggle against the landlords who thrive on it.

The term 'tanka' means contract between a landlord and tenant by which the latter is required to pay a fixed amount of paddy to the former as rent for cultivating the land.

This system prevails in the northern part of Mymensingh District in Bengal besides extending to a number of other subdivisions like Netrakona and Jamalpur. Originally the lands here were covered with jungle and weed and infested by wild animals. Later the predecessors of the present peasantry had cleared these jungles and made the lands cultivable. For this the landlords had allowed them to occupy these lands and had exempted them from certain feudal dues like 'nazar'. They were required to pay a fixed rent in kind varying from 4 to 6 mds. of paddy to 1¼ acres. This state of affairs prevailed up to 1928.

After that date the landlords began to enhance the quota from 8 to 18 mds. per 1¼ acres on an yield of 15 to 20 mds. But not only this, when the Bill for amending the Bengal Tenancy Act of 1885 was placed on the legislative agenda and proposals were put forward for granting occupancy rights to the peasants of the 'Tanka' lands, the landlords actively began to eject the 'tanka' holders from the very spots which their ancestors had cleared and rendered cultivable and which they had virtually held as occupancy tenants. The landlords began to auction the lands, irrespective of any title, to the highest bidders. Thus thousands of tenants were dispossessed and turned into agricultural labourers with no rights. The darkness of serfdom began to descend upon them.

Against this background a peasant movement developed in these regions. The peasants appealed to the District, Kisan organisation which had already helped their fellow kisans in other parts. On 18 December 1937 the peasants launched a campaign against the now discredited 'tanka' system. The Zamindars at once obtained the help of the police and the intelligence branch whose agents roamed the villages and by threats and imprisonment tried to persuade the people to fulfil their 'contracts.' The Kisan workers were not idle and about 75 meetings were held all over the area, the movement involving 2 lakhs of peasants. That year through the drastic measures of the police

some realization was possible from the bigger 'tanka' holders and because of the low level then of the peasants' fighting consciousness. But no final settlement was effected.

This year the District Kisan Samity is making active preparations for launching a heroic and victorious struggle against this monstrous form of exploitation by the Zamindars and Mahajans. The following are their demands:

1. The 'Tanka system' must be abolished.
2. The Tanka holders should be given occupancy right in their lands.
3. The rent should be paid in money and not in kind.
4. The rate of rent should be Rs 5 to 7 per 1¼ acre (as the case may be) according to the prevalent rate of money in those areas.
5. 'Nazar' should be abolished.
6. All coercive measures should be done away with.

5. Sahajanand administers oath to 40,000 Kisans

Swami Sahajanand Saraswati's speech to the Kisans of Amraoti, *Bombay Chronicle*, 9 January 1939

9 January 1939
Amraoti (By Mail)

Kisans, Labourers and Lessees of Amraoti Taluq, it is the second time that I come to you. Last year I had been to Sendurjana and had the opportunity to meet you. This year you are almost in the grip of famine. Crops have failed lamentably and the burden of debt, land revenue and rent harasses you like a hanging sword. It is really a curious irony of fate that you Kisans who produce cotton, Jowar and other things have to remain for days together without food and hardly get even torn clothes to cover your body. I hear Kisans demanding 'Give us work or bread'. Who will give you Bread?

'Who produce it? The big people living in cities? The Government? No none of these tills the land, sows it, looks after it, labours on it. None of them produces bread. It is not the Kisans who produce bread? You give bread to all. You supply bread to others. Who can give you bread? Bread is with you, you have produced it. You give it to those who lift not their finger for their livelihood. But the main source of all this vertex of trouble is what uptill now you did not keep with you what you produce, you let it go to Government in payment of taxes or revenue. You let it go to Zamindars in payment of rent or in payment of debt.

Withhold these payments. Consume what you have produced by your days' strenuous toll, consume it to your satisfaction. Let not these wolfs take possession of your crop, cotton, jwar or anything. You shall not rest satisfied with starvation confronting you day and night.

Kisan shall not starve. They work, they have the right to own and consume the fruits of their work. I hear the Tahasildars and Deputy Commissioners in this province contending that unless they deal harshly with the Kisans they are not able to collect revenue. These Tahasildars are told to deal harshly: When the peasant is in the grip of starvation these hounds pounce upon him and use coercive methods to recover revenue? They shall not rest content to get less pay. They want their food alright. But they know that in these days they shall not get fat salaries unless they deal harshly with the Kisans and get the last drop of blood from their bodies. My blood boils in me when I see these officials having the nerve to talk about harsh deeds and coercive methods.

The government have to balance their budget. But the Government forget that the Kisans, too have a budget. They have to maintain their families, incur expenditure over this and that item.

The Kisans will prepare their budget. And they will not let any power on the surface of the globe to destroy this budget. If the official budget comes in conflict with that of the Kisan, remember, a day will come when the Kisans will tear the official budget to pieces.

The Congress is in power in this province. The Congress ministers have not shown their loyalty towards kisans by declaring remissions in land revenue this year. But it is certainly shameful on the part of the Congress Government to deal harshly with the Kisans, the very people who enthroned them in these offices. Kisan is the foundation of the strength of Congress.

Instead of relying on the false reports of the Tahsildar and Deputy Commissioners, the Agents of British Imperialism, the Congress Ministers will be well advised if they depend on the Anewari Reports of true Congressmen. Government can get true information from Congress Committees at various places.

'Are your Congress Committees Dead? I learn that the Government in this Province has asked the Commissioner of Berar to hold inquiry in the crop condition. It is insulting to depend on such persons when various genuine Congressmen are declaring the crop average at 4 annas. By all such actions you are creating discontent and distrust among the Kisans but if you alienate the sympathies of the Kisans you destroy the basis of the Congress edifice. I appeal to all the Kisans today not to budge an inch. Go ahead. No power can deter you. Remember, you are not begging for bread.'

'Fight for it. Unite under Kisan Sabha banner. Strength lies in unity. If you unite and strike you will win. Therefore comrades, Unite and Strike and strike with all your might.'

The Conference then passed the following resolutions:

1. In view of the failure of crops this year, this Conference strongly requests the Government to declare remission of land revenue and rent and further exhorts Kisans of this taluq to resist any coercive processes issued by the Government officials to recover land revenue.
2. In view of the growing unemployment among the agricultural labourers and the danger of starvation which confronts them, this conference requests the Provincial Government to start famine works for them and asks the workers to organize their march on Tahsil Office with a view to expedite relief measures.
3. This Conference is of the opinion that Kisan Sabhas be established in villages with a view to ameliorate their lot and for their economic and political emancipation from foreign domination and their exploitation at the hands of Capitalists, Sahukars and Zamindars.
4. This Conference strongly condemns the Mill Owners for brushing aside the Government recommendation of 60 p.c. Wage Cut Restoration and also condemns the labour officer Mr Sen for bringing undue and unwanted influence to bear on the workers and thus throwing cold water on their enthusiasm in waging a just fight for a legitimate object. This Conference further exhorts the Mill workers to organize themselves and continue their fight to achieve their objects.

6. Kisan movement in Berar

Statement of M. Deshpande, General Secretary, Vidarbha Kisan Sabha, *Hitavada*, 13 January 1939

Amraoti
9 January 1939

The Kisan movement in Berar has entered a new phase from sending applications and holding Conferences to direct resistance. The Kisans have been provoked to take recourse to such measure not at the instance of some agitators but due to oppressive measures of the administrators themselves.

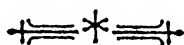
The Minister for Revenue held out an assurance to the peasants at Chandur Railway that their demands would be given fullest consideration and the stay orders would be issued by the beginning of January. January came but not with the promised orders. Instead virtual reign of terror seems to have come as the order of the day. Contrary to the public declarations of the Revenue Minister land and moveable property of the peasants are being forfeited and set up for an auction for the recovery of land dues and arrears. Sooner the Government put a stop to this better it will be for the Government to retain the confidence of the peasants in them. The indecent haste and the feverish manner in which the Tahsildars are speeding up their works have provided ground enough to create suspicion in the minds of Kisans.

The activities and behaviour of these officials has an air of sanction and support from above. These harsh dealings in these days of hardship invites resistance from the Kisans. As a rule at every place the villagers have refused to be a party in an unholy bargain and at many places like Mangpul Dastagir, Anjan Singhi, Virul Tiwara, Jalka, etc., no local man has come forward to call any bid. The tahsildars, having forestalled this development take every care that the semblance of auction must be maintained and brings mercenary bidders from outside and when they are not available pressure is brought to bear upon Patels and Patwaris, consequently the dispossessed lands are being disposed off at ridiculously low prices.

I give here few instances to substantiate the above statement:

Auction held at	Acres of land	Price at which it was auctioned	Price per acre
		Rs as. p.	Rs as p.
Tiwara (Chandur Tal)	9	50-0-0	5-0-0
"	3	45-0-0	15-0-0
"	10	40-0-0	4-0-0
"	16	95-0-0	6-0-0
Jalka (Chandur Tal)	22	50-0-0	2-0-0
"	11	30-0-0	3-0-0
"	8	35-0-0	4-0-0

How it is obvious from the above statistics that the range of prices at these two places varies between Rs 2-8 per acre to Rs 15 per acre. When it is remembered that average value of land in Berar under normal condition is now less than at least Rs 100 per acre one can imagine the audacity of Government officials to accept even the maximum auction price of Rs 15 per acre. That peasants allow their lands to be auctioned at such prices speaks volume about their poverty. No wonder then if they strongly resent the action of the Government and are determined to resist this oppression. Will it not be becoming of the Congress Ministry in the province to put an end to this harassment of the peasants instead of dubbing Kisan Sabha workers and other workers as anti-Congress and anti-Ministry agitators?



7. Kisan movement in Bihar: Fortnightly report for the period ending the 13 January 1939

Fortnightly Report, Patna, Home Political File No. 63/1939, Bihar State Archives

13 January 1939

Patna and Shahabad have been on the whole quiet, and the dispute at Muriar referred to in para 2 of my last letter has now quietened down and is being dealt with by the Police and the Magistrate. The Collector of Patna reports a number of disputes over division of produce which have been settled by sending an officer out to make the division. The situation is still bad in Gaya where there have been disputes cropping up at various places in the district accompanied by attempts to do Satyagraha on Bakasht lands, or harvest the crops forcibly. Reora continues to be the storm centre, and the position if anything has deteriorated since Swami Sahajanand took a hand in it. Volunteers from Darbhanga, Patna and Monghyr have now appeared upon the scene and it is more difficult than it was before to limit the dispute to the actual parties concerned in it. The case under section 145 will be taken up this week.

2. Regarding Whittaker's plan for deputing officers to various centers so that rents could be paid before them and receipts granted, he writes as follows:

'The programme for payment of rent and the granting of receipts before a gazetted officer was on the whole a success. In Jehanabad it was reported that the local presses were working throughout the night giving receipt books to landlords who had never issued receipts before. The average attendance at each of the centers was about 1,500 in the Jehanabad subdivision and about 800 in each of the centers in the southern part of the Sadr subdivision. The tenants took the opportunity of presenting to the presiding officer a list of other grievances besides the non-grant of receipts. These grievances are being examined.... I should be able to send out officers to examine and settle most of the points with beneficent results for the district administration, and the parties concerned.

In Nawada subdivision I have given up the rent receipt programme because this has been defeated by the curious interpretation of the new legislation that appears of rent that can be remitted along with an order for reduction of current rent. For all practical purposes this interpretation has stopped the payment of rent in Nawada and its effects are unfortunate, as it secures the maximum reward for tenants who in some cases deliberately have withheld payment of rent for the last four years. In Nawada subdivision there are now 26,000 cases u/s 112A and these are being instituted at the rate of 200 a day'.

I should doubt whether the interpretation of the legislation in respect of arrears of rent to which Whittaker refers is correct, and I presume that the matter will come before the courts in a short time. Meanwhile however it is obviously creating a difficulty and will lead to a further delay in the payment of rents.

3. Senapati reports a curious incident as follows:

'Audesh Kumar Singh, Secretary of the Dehri Thana Congress Committee and a Kisan worker, started a fast unto death as a protest against corruption in the police. The immediate occasion for the fast was the conviction of Prasad Kandu for theft of paddy from land which was in dispute between him and an influential Kayastha of his village. As the case was pending before me in appeal he was induced by Congress leaders including Babu Rajendra Prasad to give up his fast. The Dehri Thana Kisan Sabha held two sittings on that very land. Audesh Kumar Singh waxed eloquent on the wickedness of Kayasthas and a little while later made a re-entry on the stage to explain that all Kayasthas were not bad as Babu Rajendra Prasad was also a Kayastha. I have

heard the appeal and decided it in favour of Prasad Kandu which I am afraid will add a feather in the cap of Audesh Kumar. There appears to have been a row between Prasad Kandu and the Kayastha on the land, which was grossly distorted and exaggerated by the Kayastha with the help of the Defadar and the Chaukidar who by the way were the only witnesses in the case. It needed examination of the Record of Rights and rent receipts which was too complicated for the Assistant Sub-Inspector of Dehri who investigated the case. The Sub-Inspector should not have submitted charge sheet without going into the matter very thoroughly. The Assistant Magistrate, Mr Adair, who tried the case and convicted Prasad Kandu took great pains over the judgment but was unable on account of his inexperience to analyse the documentary evidence and the circumstances.'

8. Congress leaders to declare war on Kisan Sabha: Peasants march on January 26

Bombay Sentinel, 14 January 1939

14 January 1939

In accordance with the Direct Action Resolution recently adopted by the Provincial Kisan Conference at Waini, the struggle for retaining eviction from Bakasht lands has now been initiated or reinforced in about five centers in Bihar. It is understood that the expanding struggle will be carried on by the Kisan Sabha on a Province-wide scale, unless the question is quickly settled by the Government in the interests of the Kisans.

After the breakdown of the negotiations between the landlords and the tenants of Reora, re-initiated by the District Magistrate, the tenants under the direction of Pandit Jadunandan Sharma¹ and others began cutting paddy and sugarcane, digging wells and cultivating and sowing the lands attached under Section 145 CrPC.

As the struggle continued after Bharatiji and two others were arrested on 21st December, Pandit Jadunandan Sharma, the principal leader was taken in custody by the police. Mr Jayaprakash Narayan, a member of the Bihar Kisan Council and other leaders went to Reora immediately after and decided to continue the fight peacefully. More workers have since been arrested bringing the total to 17. It is noteworthy however that the Government has not dared to arrest, so far, all the Kisans engaged in removing the paddy and sugarcane crops attached on about 165 Bighas of land.

The Reora Kisan Day was observed on January 1 throughout the province.

Pandit Awadheshwar Prasad Sinha,² Secretary of the Bihar Kisan Sabha went to Dehri (Dt. Shahabad) to study on the spot the land struggle initiated there on 700 Bighas of land. In the course of a statement issued by him, he states that the struggle has been suspended on about 15 Bighas to enable the Provincial Congress Committee to settle the dispute and appeals to the Zamindar to concede the permanent tenancy rights to the Kisans. It is understood that the struggle continues unabated in the rest of the area...

Land Satyagraha has also been resumed at Sanda village after a lapse of two years under the leadership of Mr Ranganath Brahmachari. Curiously enough, he was recently arrested in connection with the Reora Campaign, so soon after his release from jail on the completion of his one year's sentence for leading the struggle in 1936.

A meeting of the Patna Kisans Council was held on January 3 when it congratulated Pandit Jadunandan Sharma and others arrested at Reora and 'condemned the repressive policy and indifference of the local Government.' The Council assured the Kisans of Reora that the district was ready to help them in every possible way, if necessity arose.

It is understood that the Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha will meet soon to consider the whole Kisan struggle raging in so many districts.

An emergent meeting of the Working Committee of Bihar Congress Committee was held on January 3-4 mainly to consider the Agrarian situation in the Province. The Committee which adjourned to 8th January without taking any decisions, took a serious view of the struggle raging at Reora in Gaya District. Meanwhile the Champaran District Congress Committee has condemned the activities of the Kisan Sabha and its Working Committee has taken disciplinary action against 29 persons 'for carrying on an incessant propaganda of unfounded allegations and calumny against the Congress.'

Shri Krishna Sinha, the Prime Minister of Bihar, has also poured out the vials of his wrath against the Kisan Sabha leaders in course of his speeches at the recent Darbhanga and Monghyr District Political Conferences.

About 18,000 peasants attended the Tamil Nadu Provincial Kisan Conference that was held at Rajapalayam on December 30 under the presidentship of Prof. N.G. Ranga, General Secretary, AIKS.

In the course of his presidential address Prof. N.G. Ranga stated that Ryots' Associations were not opposed to the Congress. He denied that the peasant movement countenanced violence and said that despite great provocations and insufferable indignities heaped upon them, the peasants continued to agitate for the redress of their grievances by peaceful means.

February 9 is declared to be the Kisan Day for the whole of Tamil Nadu to reiterate the Kisan demands.

Swamiji began his Bombay tour by addressing a peasants' meeting at Asoda (Dt. West Khandesh) under the presidentship of Sane Guruji. After completing his tour in Gujarat, Swamiji toured Ahmednagar on December 27-28. At all meetings Swamiji stressed the Kisans' right to live and to minimum subsistence as wages for his toil and exhorted them to withhold payments in lieu of rent revenue or debts if these could not be paid after providing for their maintenance.

Thousands of peasants of West Khandesh district attended a conference held at Devagaon under the presidentship of Com. S.A. Dange when the virtual failure of crops caused by excessive rains was discussed at length and resolutions were passed demanding total remission of land revenue and urging Kisans to March to the Collector's Office in support of their demands on January 26—the Independence Day.

Mr M. Deshpande, Secretary, Vidarbha Kisan Sabha, has issued an appeal to the peasants of Berar to the Deputy Commissioner's Office at Amraoti on January 26 to demand total remission of land revenue and a complete moratorium on debts. He criticizes the Congress ministries for referring the matter to the revenue officers regardless of the united voice of the peasantry and many Congress leaders on this vital question.

Three thousand agriculturists attended the Umrer Tahsil Kisan Conference held at Pipara on December 19. They not only demanded remission of rent and land revenue but also decided to inform the Government of their determination not to pay the revenue willingly this year.

About 5,000 Kisans attended the Ramtek Tahsil Kisan Conference that was held at Kodawadi. They demanded abolition of Malguzari and Mokasdari systems.

Two District Kisan Conferences were held one in Paunar on 29th under the Provincial Congress Shetkari Committee and other at Elikeli on 30th held under the auspices of the District Kisan Sabha.

The Paunar Congress Kastkar Conference, as it is generally called, was presided over by Vinobaji Bhave³ whose Presidential address marked a definite advance over the other conferences held under the aegis of the same body. Mr Vinobaji narrated at length the harrowing conditions of

the agriculturists and said that the peasant was entitled to withhold rent and revenue when he had not enough for his own maintenance. The Congress Ministers, he said, should not remain in office if it was impossible for them to redress such acute grievances of the peasants caused by crop failures.

The next day's conference held at Elikeli under the presidentship of Swami Sahajanand carried the struggle one stage forward. Along with other resolutions demanding improvements in the land legislation to be introduced in the Provincial Assembly, a resolution specifically asking the Malguzars and Kisans of the District to withhold their rent and revenue till the Government declared its policy was also passed with great enthusiasm.

Swamiji in his Presidential address expressed his surprise at seeing the Congress Ministers relying more upon the Patwaris and Tahasildars than upon the Congress Committees or the Kisan Sabhas. Supporting the no-rent movement, he said, that he had not much belief in applications and resolutions, but advised the Kisans to consume the things they produce. He concluded his address by congratulating the Wardha Kisans for the decisions they had taken and wished them every success.

Mr P.D. Marathe the CP Kisan Secretary, has issued a statement to the press in support of the no-tax movement. He says: 'Leading Kisan workers of the province have decided with the hearty approval of Swami Sahajanand Saraswati to lead Kisan Marches to the Tehsil Revenue Offices as well as the Government Secretariat at Nagpur on the National Independence Day, January 26, to submit to the authorities and Ministers a correct picture of desperate conditions and the decisions of Kisans and secure remission of all rents, revenue and a moratorium on the payment of all debts.

The no-rent campaign inaugurated in Mandvi Taluka (Surat Dt.) has now reached a critical stage. Several rent decrees have been passed and many Kisans' corn has been attached and seized by the revenue officers. Twenty seven persons arrested.

The no-rent campaign is forging ahead in Kalol Taluka (dt. Panchmahals). The Kisans in both the areas have been strengthened in their determination to bend the landlords to their knees by the inspiring sermons delivered by Swami Sahajanand during his recent tour.

On the 26th November, a procession was arranged by Desher Bazaar Central Committee to give a fitting reception to the five Kisan Comrades of Shikura, who were in Jail in connection with the Kisan Movement. After 3 hours' march when the procession was passing by the residence of the Bahadurpur Zamindars, it was suddenly attacked with deadly weapons by about 40 Lathials of the Zamindars. Comrades Suresh Chandra Dev, Abala Gupta, Jiten Bhattacharjee, and Nalini Gupta of Surma Valley Provincial Kisan Samiti, who were on the forefront of the procession tried to pacify them, but Zamindar present, ordered that the procession would not be allowed to pass and asked the Lathials to continue the attack. As directed by the Comrades leading the procession every processionist squatted on the ground and for twenty-five minutes the brutal attack was continued on the unarmed and peaceful processionists till one had become senseless, and many thrown in the adjacent river. Comrade Manum Ulla, a well-known Kisan organizer of Desher-Bazaar was arrested by the Zamindar's man and was detained for an hour in the house of the Zamindar. A criminal case has been instituted against some alleged offenders.

The Zamindari offensive at Rafinagar, Machhimpur, Kittagram and other villages of the Betul parganah in the sub-division of Sunamganj has reached its limit.

The Zamindars of Bhatipara had been carrying on illegal exactions and exorbitant rent for a long period. The standard of land measurements, $7\frac{1}{2}$ cubits long, has been reduced to $6\frac{1}{2}$ and 7 cubits, though the rate of rent has remained as before; hence the redoubled rent pressure on the peasants. The burden of arrears of rent enhanced, peasants could not pay the rent of Zamindars. Rent suits, illegal and forcible ejectment were the order of the day. Not content with regular

Zamindari terrorism, the Zamindar requisitioned armed police force from Sunamganj to terrorise the peasantry.

¹ Jadunandan, Sharma (1896–1975); born in Majhiawa village, Gaya district in poor Brahmin family; had been illiterate and worked as a cowherd, ran away from home in 1914 with a passion to become literate; in 1919 he matriculated from Tekari High School and started working as a primary school teacher; unhappy with his surroundings, he left for Benares in 1925 and in 1927 graduated from Benares Hindu University. In 1929, he participated in the Civil Disobedience movement as a satyagrahi and had been jailed in 1930 for 16 months. After coming out of prison, he joined the Sahajanand Saraswati-led Kisan movement in Bihar in 1933. Soon he turned out to be a very prominent Kisan leader of Bihar (only second to Sahajanand) and led the Bakasht agitation against the zamindars as its most militant exponent; he launched the Kisan Satyagraha at Reora and led the 'Crop Seizure' in the disputed lands for which he was arrested. With the beginning of the Second World War, Jadunandan had to go underground for his 'anti-Imperialist War' position. He surfaced in 1942 when the 'People's War' line was formulated. He did not however join the Communists, and continued to work with Sahajanand for a 'Non-Party Kisan Sabha', and concentrated, after Sahajanand's death, on the demand for the abolition of Zamindari. With the abolition of Zamindari by the mid-1950s in independent India, Jadunandan's career as a radical agrarian agitator came practically to an end. The subsequent 20 years, he lived as an extremely popular, venerable Kisan leader in retirement.

² Awadeshwar Prasad Sinha (1907–89); imprisoned for participating in the Civil Disobedience movement, 1930; was active in the Kisan Sabha, 1933–48; Congress Socialist Party (later named Socialist Party) 1934–48; Secretary, Bihar Kisan Sabha, 1935–41; President, All India Kisan Sabha, 1941–42; detained, 1942–45; when the Socialist Party decided to ask its members to leave the Congress (1948), he left the party and chose to function inside the Congress; member, Provincial Parliament, 1950–52; Lok Sabha, 1952–56 and Rajya Sabha, 1956–76.

³ Vinayak Narahari Bhawe, commonly known as Vinoba Bhawe, was born at Gagoda, Peu taluk, Kolaba district, Maharashtra on 11 September 1895. He studied Sanskrit at Benares. He also learnt Arabic, Persian, French, Urdu and many other Indian languages. In early 1915, Vinoba Bhawe came into contact with Gandhiji. In 1921, Gandhiji sent him to Wardha to start an ashram there. Later Vinoba Bhawe started Bhoodan. In his Bhoodan Campaign, Harijans had a special consideration. As most of them were landless, he decided to distribute one-third of his land gains among Harijans. He was one of the moving spirits of the Nagpur Flag Satyagraha in May 1923 and he was jailed in this Satyagraha. In 1924, Gandhiji sent him to Guruvayur (Kerala) to participate in the Harijan Temple Entry Satyagraha. He participated in Salt Satyagraha in 1930, for which he was again sent to prison. Vinoba Bhawe was chosen the first individual satyagrahi in October 1940 and was again sent to jail. After Independence, he argued for self-sufficiency of villages. He was Editor, *Sarvodaya*, 1949.

9. Bihar Battles for *Bakasht*

National Front, 15 January 1939

Reora is a village in Gaya district. It belonged to the famous Zamindars of Daryapur who have only a 4 anna share while the 12 anna share has passed to Rameshwar Prasad Singh who is the Chairman of the District Board and the second biggest Zamindar in the district.

The issue is Bakasht. The battle is for 1000 bighas. The peasants say they have been cultivating the land and won't part with it; they have a right to it.

The District Congress Committee appointed a Bakasht Sub-Committee which reported that 850 bighas belonged to the Kisans and the rest to the Zamindars.

In the beginning the Kisan Sabha too was for a compromise. The Finance Minister offered that the matter should go to arbitration. The local MLA (Congress) suggested a Committee of three – a Kisan Sabha representative, one Zamindar's man, and one more out of a panel of 10 names which included Sir Ganesh, an ex-minister and himself a big Zamindar, and failing which the Government may choose the third name.

The Zamindar refused to accept even such arbitration. This is the fruit of the Congress–Zamindar Agreement; it has put some courage into them.

Then came talks between the local MLA and the district magistrate but no results.

Jadunandan Sharma, the President of Kisan Sabha went there and talked with the local SDO. There was to be no breaking of the law, but meetings could be held, volunteers enrolled, and agitation carried on, Sharmaji began his work.

On 15 November, like a bolt from the blue, a notice under sec. 144 CrPC was served on him. He is second in popularity only to Swamiji among the Kisans of Behar.

The Central and local MLA's had given guarantee to the local authorities that there would be no 'trouble' for a month if Sharma was allowed to work freely. Yet Sharma was sought to be gagged. The reality was that a big Kisan meeting was due, and it had to be prevented. Gurkha police had been dispatched to the locality and this had to be justified. Hence this seemingly uncalled for use of Sec. 144.

Sharma decided to break Sec. 144. It was withdrawn and a Government communique was issued, containing some sort of an excuse.

Again negotiations were started. The land to remain in possession of the party that holds it was Sharmaji's stand. There can be no negotiations on the basis that no *Nazrana* be paid to the Zamindar, was the District Magistrate's answer.

On 16th December, Sharma put in writing the 13 demands and gave notice that the Kisans would reap the paddy crop on 20th December and they began doing it.

The local SDO, DSP and 40-50 constables stationed themselves on the spot.

On 22nd December, 3 Kisan Sabha workers were arrested. On 23rd December Jadunandan Sharma was also arrested under Sec. 379 (theft). The same day witnessed the arrest of 5 more. Then came the arrest of the President and Secretary of the village Panchayat and another six Kisans. The total stands at 17.

The Kisan Sabha wants the right to cultivate while awaiting the result of arbitration but the zamindars won't have any arbitration. Sharmaji got 150 bighas cultivated. The rest of the land remains fallow. The Kisans are starving. They have themselves dug a well and with its help are growing vegetables and waiting for the cane crop. Their distress is great.

The stand of the Ministry is that Satyagraha was premature and the avenue of negotiations was not tired out. It is the same story we are familiar with in Bombay no struggle, no action, facts be damned. But here the C.S.P. comrades are sought to be damned, and not the Communists, again by the Congress Ministry and with the same arguments as in Bombay.

When you defy the law, we have to arrest you runs the excuse. The Zamindars' recalcitrance, their terror, the District Magistrate's suppression of civil liberties does not seem to concern the Ministry.

Files have been discovered which disclose that the District Magistrate was pro-landlord, deliberately kept the Ministry in the dark and personally prevented a settlement. Jail, however, is for Sharmaji and his valiant 16, and starvation for the kisans and not B. Rameshwar Prasad Singh who stood against the Congress in the last elections and was defeated by Kisan votes which all went to B. Yamuna Pd. Singh, the Congress candidate. Yamuna has been unable to bring about a settlement, despite the Congress Ministry and the whole of Behar know it is because of the bureaucracy secretly but directly egging on the Zamindars. Yet the Ministry sends Kisan workers to jail and Congress leaders preach sermons to them.

The Kisan Sabha is even now for a settlement but it won't negotiate till Sharmaji is released.

The land has been attached by Government and neither party can go near it.

The general mood in the village is one of defiance. Complete solidarity in the village prevails. There is not one man for the Zamindar, this is literally true.

The victory at Reora would give a fillip to the Kisan movement throughout Behar. The problem of Bakasht is a live issue everywhere.

10. Askote

Article written at Almora, 25 January 1939, *National Herald*, 29 January 1939. Reprinted in *The Unity of India*, London, 1941, pp. 144–46.

Almora

25 January 1939

The first week of January of this year saw a remarkable pilgrimage. Five hundred peasants from Askote marched across the mountains and the valleys to lay their grievances before the Prime Minister of the United Provinces Government at Lucknow.¹ There were no roads or swift means of transport and for a full week they tramped, following the bridle path, to the distant plains below.

Where is this Askote? Who had heard of it before this band of five hundred determined men forced it on people's notice and put Askote on the map of India? Few, I imagine, outside the district of Almora knew of it, Askote is a taluqa in Almora district, a frontier region bordering on Nepal and not far from Tibet. It is a week's march from Almora town. One hundred and forty two villages dot its four hundred square miles, most of which are forest land.

This taluqa is held under a peculiar tenure by the *rajwar*, as the zamindar is called. Before the conquest of Kumaun by the Gurkhas, the *rajwar* seems to have considered himself a semi-independent chief and had freedom to do what he liked, subject to some kind of payment to the overlord. The Gurkhas reduced his status and made him a farmer of land revenue. Even then he had a great deal of freedom and could deal with his tenants as he liked so long as he paid the sum assessed by the Government. The coming of the British made no essential difference to him, and though a number of settlements were made, his privileged position continued and he was unlike any other landlord in Kumaun. The British officers were anxious to keep on good terms with this frontier baron, who occupied a position of some strategic importance. Sir Henry Ramsay, the Commissioner of Kumaun, wrote in 1873: 'If political difficulties arise on the eastern frontier of Kumaun, the *rajwar*'s services will be as much required and as valuable as ever, and to maintain his important position, it is most desirable that his former status be maintained.'

So the *rajwar* continued, in practice if not in strict law, as a feudal chief far removed from any control from above. The Government was obliging enough to make him a special magistrate and his brother the local police officer and *patwari*. (*Patwaris* in Kumaun have special powers.) The *rajwar* family was thus all-powerful and it was impossible for any of the tenants to object or protest against any imposition. There was not even a telegraph office in Askote, and the post to Almora took many days. The peasantry were backward and had to put up with a large number of payments, other than rent, on the ground of custom.

Echoes of the Non-cooperation movement reached Askote and gradually the peasants began to wake up and agitate against many of the illegal dues. They were crushed by the *rajwar* family repeatedly, and the agitation subsided for a while, but only to rise again. In 1938, the Congress government sent two committees to inquire and lengthy reports were presented by these committees. The people waited patiently hoping that some relief would come to them at last. They had heard of some of the recommendations made in these reports and did not know that the wheels of governments move terribly slowly. Instead of relief coming there was some fresh aggression on behalf of the *rajwar* and then they lost patience.

They decided to march to Lucknow, and five hundred of them started on the long trail. A mild sensation was created; the whole district knew about it, and the peasantry followed the march with interest. Efforts were made to stop them by promises and assurances, but they continued till they reached the plains at Pilibhit. There, in response to a personal appeal from the Prime Minister, they stopped and sent a small deputation to interview him in Lucknow. They returned with the

Prime Minister's word that he would set right their grievances. They are waiting for the fulfillment of that promise.

This Askote march has its lessons for us if we care to learn them. The Congress organization in Almora was inactive and did little for the Askote people, government was slow-moving, and so these backward peasants, totally ignorant of politics and demonstrations, took the initiative into their own hands and decided to present their case personally to the big people at the top. By taking this step they succeeded more than they had done by years of patient petitioning. Their political education has begun and their progress is likely to be rapid.

¹ The main grievances of the peasantry were that they were tenants-at-will and could be ejected at any time. Every peasant was also required to do forced labour without any wages for at least three days in a year on the *rajwar's* (zamindar's) land.

11. 27 Arrested in Mandavi

National Front, 15 January 1939

The no-rent campaign inaugurated in Mandavi Taluka (Surat Dt.) has now reached a critical stage. Several rent decrees have been passed and many Kisans' corn has been attached and seized by the revenue officers.

On 31st December, the revenue officers of Paradi attached about 30 maunds of rice from the hut of a Kisan against whom a rent decree had been passed. The landlords complained that some 21 persons including some old women and young boys had sacked the rice and replaced it in the hut of the peasant. The women and boys were released almost immediately after their arrest while the rest of the accused were sent off to the Surat jail. The arrested Kisans refused to be released on bail and enlivened the streets of Surat by singing Kisan songs and shouting 'Inquilab Zindabad', 'Kisan Sabha Zindabad', etc.

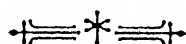
Some 7 more Kisans were arrested the next day in the same village on charges of assaulting a landlord and his party when they trespassed upon the threshing floor of some Kisans on the ostensible excuse of inspecting his tenant's crops.

Mr Golwala, a young Kisan Worker of Surat was also arrested on the same day on being charged with an attempt to interfere with the attachment of rice from a Kisan's hut at Paradi. He has been sentenced to 3 months rigorous imprisonment and a fine of Rs 50.

Mr Indulal Yajnik, Jt. Secretary, AIKS on receiving a telegraphic message from Mr Pangarkar¹ reached Mandavi on 3rd morning when the latter arrived there from Paradi village with a contingent of about 500 Raniparaj peasants who undismayed by the arrests of their comrades, expressed their readiness to carry on the struggle to its victorious conclusion.

The no-rent campaign is forging ahead in Kalol Taluka (Dt. Panchmahals). The Kisans in both the areas have been strengthened in their determination to bend the landlords to their knees by the inspiring sermons delivered by Swami Sahajanand during his recent tour.

¹ D.M. Pangarkar, a distinguished and popular leader of the Gujarat Provincial Kisan Sabha led throughout the 1930s many glorious struggles of the bonded labourers, share croppers and small cultivators of the province, especially of those belonging to South Gujarat.



12. Gandhi's speech at meeting of peasants¹

CWMG, Vol. 68, pp. 333-34

Bardoli

26 January 1939

I went through the resolutions you have passed before coming here. Let me congratulate both the parties on it. Sardar has said that you have passed these resolutions with God as your witness. You have already had some experience of what happens when a man breaks his vow. I do hope that you will fully adhere to these resolutions. Quite often, when people do not make such resolutions of their own accord, law compels them to do so, which carries with it some kind of punishment. It is a good thing that you have passed these resolutions of your own free will. It is not an ordinary thing that the Dublas have ceased to be serfs and have become free. Of course, these resolutions gave me an impression that the peasants in this part are big businessmen for, through these resolutions they have indeed struck a big bargain. What is so great about paying fair daily wages to the Dublas for the full quota of work whereas formerly they were made to work as much as the owners desired? I am not greatly impressed by it. According to me, any man or woman must get the minimum wage of 8 annas for 8 hours of work. God willing, such conditions will be created in my lifetime. You may find 8 annas a big thing; but it really is not so big. But you have fixed 3 annas as the wages for a woman labourer, whereas you will take the same amount of work from her. Do you think those people will run away from you? Hence, even while congratulating you, I tell you that you have struck a bargain.

I would like to insist that you should not take the resolution too literally. Do not think that you can never pay more than 4½ annas and 3 annas. The very fact that you have made them free implies that they are free to work wherever they choose and earn the wages they can. The great significance of this resolution is that they will remain where they are and your relations will be pure. The fact that a Dubla ceases to be a serf and becomes a ploughman does not mean that the farmer will not plough the land. The plough will belong to the farmer and the Dubla will use it for him. But the real ploughman, in fact, is the tiller of the land and the ideal condition will be that in which both the farmer and the serf become ploughmen. Further, the resolution does not mean that even when it has been a good year and there are bumper crops you will pay only 4½ annas as wages. If you do so, I would say that you have not carried out your resolution.

You had taken the great vow of independence in 1921. You have not yet fulfilled the major part of it. What you have done now should have been done in 1921. This means that you delayed what should have been done many years ago. Nevertheless, I congratulate you as this is a meritorious act.

Agriculture is our basic occupation. But we are not very good agriculturists, because our farming does not keep us busy throughout the year. Nor does it give us enough to eat. That is why I have described the *charkha* as *Annafurna* and praise it even today as much as I did formerly. Hence, if the farmers want to make progress, they will have to supplement their income by taking to the *charkha*. Thus you should devote all your free time to the *charkha*.

I hope the resolutions will be implemented by both the parties.

¹ The meeting with an attendance of between 10 and 15 thousand landowners and Halis or Dublas, was held to approve the recommendations made by a committee of farmers and village workers, formed in the previous year to consider the question of the emancipation of Halis whose status was that of Serfs. The committee had made the following recommendations:

(1) Every Hali to be emancipated, the wages from 26 January 1939 to be as 4/6 (for males) and as 3 (for females); (2) every Hali who has worked on his master's farm for twelve years or more is automatically free from all his debts to him; (3) such Halis as may have worked for less than twelve years to have credited to their account a twelfth of the debt for every year that they have worked; (4) an anna per day to be deducted from the wage, in the case of men, until the debt is repaid; (5) everyone to be declared free from debt on expiry of 12 years, whether the debt be paid or not; (6) every debt to expire with the debtor's life; (7) a Dubla may engage himself on an annual wage of Rs 80, and Rs 15 may be deducted from his wage for repayment of a debt due if any; (8) a village committee to be appointed to settle all questions pertaining to debts

13. Kisan Conference at Dhaliwal: Report of a Kisan Conference at Dhaliwal, Kapurthala State, under the presidentship of Arur Singh *Tribune*, 30 January 1939

Kapurthala
27 January 1939

Kisans numbering about 3,000 met in a conference yesterday at village Dhaliwal in Kapurthala State, Mr Arur Singh presiding. The national flag was hoisted by Sardar Chanan Singh, President of the Kapurthala State Praja Mandal, Mr Achint Ram, General Secretary of the Reception Committee of the forthcoming All India States Peoples' Conference to be held at Ludhiana and other leaders of the State. They exhorted the audience to organize themselves for a united front and continue the struggle for their rights. The conference passed a number of resolutions declaring that the proposed Federal Scheme was wholly unsatisfactory and unacceptable and urging that the Kapurthala Durbar should not join the Federation against the wishes of the public as no representation has been granted to the State subjects. The conference condemned the action of the Durbar in not granting any remission for the *kharif* crops which had failed due to drought. The conference demanded reduction of land revenue by 5 per cent, bringing it to the level of the rates in the adjoining districts of the Punjab. The conference urged upon the Kapurthala Durbar to remove the errors existing in the classification of lands and that the *chahi*, *malba*, *chowkidara* and professional taxes should be abolished. The Conference thought that the announcement of 18 made by the Durbar appointing a Committee regarding the reconstitution of the State Assembly was wholly unsatisfactory as most of its members were officials or semi-officials and the appointment of the chairman of the Committee was against the principle of democracy. The conference in the end invited the attention of the Durbar to the poverty in the villages and urged that excepting the 'panjotra' tax, the money should be handed over to the local Boards so that satisfactory arrangements could be made by them for schools, hospitals, prevention of epidemics, and the vaccination of the cattle.

14. UP affiliates to AIKS

Congress Socialist, 29 January 1939

About 50,000 Kisans attended a special session of the UP Provincial Kisan Conference that was held at Ayodhya on 29th December under the presidentship of Acharya Narendra Dev. The President reviewed the history of the Kisan Movement in UP from its early beginnings in 1921-22 and enlarged on the dictum that the poverty of the Kisan could not be relieved without ending the zamindari system which was allied with Imperialism.

On the proposal of Sjt Mohanlal Gautam,¹ the Secretary of the Provincial Sangh, the Conference adopted the most important resolution to affiliate to the All India Kisan Sabha.

Other resolutions were also adopted demanding necessary remission in rent on account of bad harvest, the withdrawal of cases under Sec. 107 against Kisan workers and for cancelling the arms licenses of oppressive Zamindars and their men.

¹ Mohanlal Gautam (1902–77); participated in the Non-Cooperation and Khilafat movements; joined Servants of People Society, 1924; General Secretary, UPPCC, 1930–31; its Secretary, 1936, 1963–64, and President, 1969; Joint Secretary, Congress Socialist Party, 1934, and member of its National Executive, 1936; member of U.P. Legislative Assembly, 1937–46, 1952–62, and 1967–69, Constituent Assembly, 1946–50, Provisional Parliament, 1950–52, and Rajya Sabha, 1969–72; Minister, UP Government, 1952–54, and 1956–60.

15. Gandhi's Speech at meeting of peasants

CWMG, Vol. 68, pp. 345–46

Varad

29 January 1939

There can be no two opinions that this is an auspicious occasion. There was a time when we were faced with confiscation of our lands and when they were actually confiscated we declared times without number in our speeches that the Government would not be able to retain them, that they would be returned to the owners. And now these lands have been returned. Do not think that we have been able to get them back by our ceaseless efforts. You would be making a great mistake if you thought so. We have succeeded to the extent we adhered to truth and non-violence. Chitta Patel remained firm and never came to Varad. He therefore completely fulfilled his pledge. India abounds in such men and it is owing to their merit alone that we have got back our lands.

But we must know how to lose them again should an occasion arise. To believe that restoration of lands means that we have won swaraj or that we have become fit for it is to commit a sin. It suggests that for winning swaraj, we have to tread the path which we have trodden so far. Let us not delude ourselves that nothing remains for us to do now. If we play the game guided by self-interest and pecuniary motives, we are bound to lose. I wish to warn you that a greater ordeal is yet to come.

Let us in all humility pray to God that he may bless us with strength a hundredfold of that which he has bestowed on us up to now, so that we may be able to stand more fiery ordeals. We have had the courage to go to jail, to lose our homes and lands. Let us now pray for the courage to go to the scaffold cheerfully or to become ashes in a consuming fire. When we have exhibited that courage, swaraj will be ours, and no one dare rob us of it. But if we forget the lesson today, we shall lose the battle and be bankrupt. I hope and pray that none of us may be found wanting when the supreme test comes.

16. Restoration of lands in Ras: Villagers celebrate

Times of India, 1 February 1939

Nadiad

30 January 1939

Information has been received here that, under the provisions of the Bombay Forfeited Lands Restoration Act, about 1,500 acres of land which was forfeited during the civil disobedience movement in Borsad Taluka has been resumed by Government and restored to the original owners. In the village of Ras, where about 1,000 acres of land was forfeited, the villagers celebrated the

restoration with a procession and a feast. All lands have been restored in 11 villages in Borsad Taluka.

17. Kisan Conference at Jalgaon

Extract from Confidential Report of the D.M., East Khandesh, File No. 958, Pt.I/1938-40, Home Dept. (Special), Maharashtra State Archives

6 February 1939

Fifteen thousand peasants from different parts of the district attended the conference at Jalgaon on 26 January 1939. They came in batches shouting slogans such as 'wanted remission of Land Revenue at once,' 'withhold payments of Land Revenue etc.'

The conference of Jalgaon was held on 26 January 1939 under the presidentship of Mr K.M. Jedhe of Poona.

The President Mr Jedhe spoke mostly in favour of the untouchables and against the advanced castes viz., Brahmins, and creditors and pleaders. His remarks about the Hindu Sabhaists were not welcome to the audience and they claimed some definite promise for remission of Land Revenue for which purpose only they had come there. There was some fear of disorder, but the speaker changed the subject.

Mr Dastane said that the Congress Government should be requested to consider the pitiful condition of the peasants and to declare suitable remission of assessment. He further said that Government should warn District Officers not to give threats to the peasants with regard to the recovery of assessment. He further said that the Congress Ministry had little power and that the structure in which the Congress Ministry was sitting was already set on fire by the British Government and if the Ministers were not able to obtain remission the peasants should not distrust then.

Mr Dange said that the *annewari* was fixed by the Collector who was not elected by the peasants and hence the real grievance of the peasants would not be put before the Ministers. He advised the youth of the villages to form peasant protection committees and the peasants not to purchase the property attached. He added that the movement should be carried under both the flags viz., tri-coloured flag and the red flag.

Mr Sitaram Bhau Choudhari said that instead of suitable remission the words complete remission should be substituted.

Mr Zaga Ukha Patil said that the peasants might have to take to Satyagraha to obtain remission.

Mr Rajmal Lakhichand stated that he had seen the Ministers who had promised him to give facilities to the peasants after considering the Budget. He advised the peasants not to create factions.

Mr Hari Bhau Chavan said that Government should reduce the excessive assessment and should at once pass an Act for the removal of debts. He added that Civil attachments should be stopped and the unfavourable conditions at present put on the tenants in the Tenancy Act should be removed.

Mr Lalji Moreshwar Pendse while describing the condition of the peasants said that the assessment should be reduced and in order to remove the heavy indebtedness of the peasants the debt bonds should be torn to pieces by Government. To avoid the difficulty of the Budget at present put forth he suggested that the transactions of gold, silver and speculation should be taxed. He added that so long as the British Government was there the condition of the peasants would not improve and hence the peasants should support the Congress.

Mr S.D. Deo said that the public must stop civil quarrels in order to remove foreign imperialism and added that when the Ministers found that they could no longer do good to the public they would abandon their office and the public should be prepared to struggle under the national flag.

Messrs Sane, Ramdas Bhau, Gambhirrao Avchitrao and Devkinandan Narayan made short speeches in support of the resolution moved by Mr Sane as regards the removal of toll tax introduced by some Municipalities in the District on empty and loaded carts.

The following resolutions were passed in the conference:

- (1) that on account of heavy rains the crops are damaged to a varying extent throughout the District and hence the Congress Government should consider the pitiful condition of the peasants and should declare suitable remission of assessment without delay.
- (2) that according to the resolution passed in the Congress Session at Faizpur excessive assessment should be reduced, an Act for the removal of debts should be passed and in the meanwhile the period of the Act suspending debts should be extended, civil attachments should be stopped and the unfavourable conditions at present put on the tenants in the Tenancy Act should be removed.
- (3) that the Toll tax introduced by some of the Municipalities in the District on empty and loaded carts should at once be cancelled.
- (4) that with a view to lighten the burden of the debts of the peasants and to make their life happy salaries of Rs 75 and above of the Government servants should be subjected to a cut.

The accompanying Independence pledge was read and the conference ended with the song of *Vande Mataram*.

18. Awakened peasantry will be helpful to Congress:

Prof. Ranga's statement

Tribune, 10 February 1939

Calcutta

8 February 1939

'An Awakened peasantry as the All India Kisan Sabha offers to the country today by awakening class consciousness among the Kisans, will prove an enthusiastic and able ally to the Indian National Congress to carry on its next struggle to a successful end', said Professor N.G. Ranga, while talking to a representative of the *Associated Press* on the gradual development of the Kisan Sabha in the country.

Referring to the situation in the Orissa States, Prof. Ranga said that in Talcher and Dhenkanal the struggle was being conducted entirely by the peasants and such was also the position in Rajkot and Mansa States. 'They show' he added 'what revolutionary potentialities there are in our Kisan India. Therefore I feel confident that if the Tripuri session of the Indian National Congress decides upon giving an ultimatum to the British Government; the awakened Kisans will be there to implement it and to bring credit both to themselves and the Congress.'

He warned Congressmen all over the country that they owed it to the Congress and the Kisans that they should make it perfectly clear to Kisan India that once independence had been achieved for India, the satisfaction of the immediate needs of the Kisans would be the first concern of the Congress. It would also then be the primary object of the Congress and the nation to do all in their power to assure a better life and a fuller share in control over the social, economic and political

institutions of the country. 'If they do not give that assurance', added Prof. Ranga 'they will fail to do the one right thing which is the most essential thing to ensure unqualified success.'

'For the last 18 months', he continued, 'our Kisan Sabhaites have had to work against great odds, specially when disciplinary action of the Congress was hanging over their heads like a sword and for months they were liable to be accused of opposing their own Congress Government'.

19. The Tenancy Bill

'The Tenancy Bill', Editorial, *Bombay Chronicle*, 11 February 1939

11 February 1939

The Bombay Government's Tenancy Bill, which was introduced into the Legislative Assembly during its last session, passed its first reading on Thursday by a decisive majority of 64 votes against 43. A non-official motion for circulation to elicit public opinion having been defeated by a larger majority of 60 votes against 17, the Bill has been referred to a thoroughly representative Select Committee. The voting figures show that the House accepts the principle of the Bill and has no patience with any dilatory tactics. The principle is to give protection to tenants against harassment and unjust eviction by their landlords. The Bill, as the Revenue Minister¹ stated, is only one of a series of measures undertaken by the Government for rural uplift. These measures are evidently in pursuance of the Congress party's promise in its election manifesto, which stated: 'The Congress reiterates its declaration made at Karachi that it stands for a reform of the system of land tenure and of revenue and rent and for an equitable adjustment of the burden of agricultural land giving immediate relief to the smaller peasantry by a substantial reduction of agricultural rent and revenue now paid by them and exempting uneconomic holdings from the payment of rent and revenue.' In its own sphere the present Bill does not go very far in the fulfillment of the above pledge. But it may be regarded as only a first cautious experiment like the experiments made in prohibition. The Bill may also be materially improved by the Select Committee in conformity with the pledge quoted above.

The main provisions of the Bill, confer rights of permanency on tenants who through generations have remained tenants at-will liable to be deprived of their tenancy at the will of the landlords. This protection is to extend to tenants who have held and cultivated land for not less than six years immediately preceding the first day of January 1938. This would apply to all tenants of land under *Inam*, *Talukdari* or *Khoti* tenure. But in the case of lands under *Ryotwari* tenure the protection is restricted to tenants of such landlords who owned more than 33 1/3 acres of irrigated land or more than 100 acres of unirrigated land or who paid an annual assessment of more than Rs 150, on whatever kind of land. But the Bill also provides that the landlord can evict the tenant in certain contingencies like the latter's refusal to pay a 'reasonable' rent adjudged, as such by competent authorities or if he fails to pay up arrears in four instalments. The term 'reasonable', however, is not clearly explained with regard to any recognized standards, the authorities concerned being only asked to pay due regard to the rental values of lands used for smaller purposes in the locality.

The shortcomings of the Bill from the point of view of its avowed principle are on the surface. Since it is conceded that all tenants need protection, it is surprising that the Bill confines its benefits to only such of the ryotwari tenants as are under landlords who own 33 1/3 or more acres of irrigated land, or 100 or more acres of other land or who pay an assessment of at least Rs 150. It is estimated that such tenants are fewer than five per cent of the total number of ryotwari tenants. Yet it is the majority of the excluded tenants that need protection most. It is desirable that the benefits

of the Bill should be extended to a much larger number of tenants. Again, the absence of a clear explanation of 'reasonable' rent may lead to ruinous litigation and injustice to rack-rented tenants. The suggestion to the authorities that in fixing a 'reasonable' rent due regard should be paid to the rental values of lands used for similar purposes is not very helpful. For the rental values in the locality may themselves be inflated and unreasonable. Competitive rents are often unconscionably high in a country like India where owing to poor industrial development the pressure on land is so heavy that tenants have either to pay enormous rents or starve. It is essential that any explanation of a 'reasonable' rent must provide for a minimum subsistence for the tenant. The Land and Agriculture Committee of Burma is reported to have urged the view in its recent report on Tenancy that a fair rent is that part of the crop which remains 'after the cultivator of an economic holding has met the normal costs of cultivation and maintained himself and his family in reasonable comfort as that is understood by this class of cultivator in the district in which he lives.' This is a fair explanation of reasonable rent and we commend it to the Select Committee. Its principle is already accepted by the Congress in its election pledge to 'exempt uneconomic holdings from the payment of rent and revenue. We earnestly hope the Select Committee will so improve the Bill as to give effective protection to all those tenants who need it.'

¹ The Revenue Minister of Bombay during this period was Morarji Desai.

20 Battle Royal at Barahiya Tal

National Front, 12 February 1939

During the last fortnight comparative peace reigns at Reora. The scene of action has shifted to Barahiya Tal.

On 23rd January: a representative Committee met at the Collector's bungalow to explore avenues of a settlement. The conference however proved futile due to the obstinacy of the zamindars, and the terrorism of the Zamindar's men rages unabated. The following bits of news received from the Tal front are highly instructive:

27th January: Organised attacks on the poor Kisan travellers are almost daily made. The crops sown by the tenants are looted by the men of the zamindars. In view of the serious condition of the Tal area all the workers of the District Kishan Sabha along with Pandit Karyananda Sharma have started for Tal area.

28th January: The men of the zamindars who have been posted in the Tal area to harass the Tal women by standing in those fields which have been used from time immemorial for latrine ground.

2nd February: Acharya Narendra Dev, the socialist leader of UP arrived this morning at Barahiya Tal and addressed a kisan meeting in the village of Bahanpur in the Barahiya Tal area. Half the audience was made up of the women of the Tal area. Swami Sahajanand Saraswati also accompanied Acharyaji along with Pandit Karyananda Sharma, Acharyaji deprecated the activities of the Bihar Congress Ministry for allowing the zamindars to play their own game in the Tal area. Acharyaji was presented with a guard-of-honour by the volunteers of the local Kisan Sevak Dal.

3rd February: Assaults are being made almost daily on the Kisans—Kisan volunteers, Kisan women and Kisan children, sometimes for offering satyagraha in the fields and sometimes for reasons known to none.

Lathi charges and 2 arrests

Pandit Karyanand Sharma has now issued a statement summing up the whole situation. He writes:

'Lathials of the zamindars numbering 30 nearly attacked the Kisans and the Kisan workers at Repura, P.S. Barahiya on 1 February 1939. The lathials collected on the roads coming out of the village and compelled the inhabitants not to leave it.

Finding no alternative the inhabitants including men, women, children in a body got out of the village to take grass for their cattle. They came back empty handed. They were attacked by the lathials and 24 including kisan volunteers and 4 women were assaulted with lathis. The condition of the mother of Amrit Mahton is said to be serious. Nanulal's head was fractured. Ramsarup Sharma, in-charge volunteer camp, rushed to the scene and he was attacked. He received three lathi-blows.... Some of them have received more than 20 lathi-blows.

The authorities are silent on this point. Kisans are being arrested on the complaints of the zamindars under Sec. 379 and unbailable warrants are being issued for it. To arrest under Sec. 107 is now a simple thing in Tal area.

Under this lathi-raj the authorities are thinking of getting the matter settled by an arbitration committee. But the tenants will have nothing to do with this arbitration committee till the atmosphere is changed.

So the three year old battle for land crops rages in Tal area. Whatever zamindars and Government may do to terrorise the Kisans the ultimate victory of the latter is assured.

21. Kisan movement in Berar

Report of a meeting at Amraoti, *Hitavada*, 15 February 1939

Amraoti
14 February 1939

Excitement ran high at the public meeting held here yesterday in the Jog Square when speaker after speaker vehemently disapproved of the policy of the Congress Ministry in their communiqué regarding suspension of land revenue. The meeting was convened under the joint auspices of the Congress and the Vidarbha Kisan Sabha to express public opinion on the failure of the government to provide substantial relief to the peasants of Berar. This bold step taken by the District, Taluq and City Congress Committees attracted a large audience. Dr G.G. Bhodraj, President of the DCC, was in the chair.

Dr Bhodraj referred to the circumstances which had led to the convening of the meeting. He said:

Since the publication of the Government communiqué we were anxiously waiting for its reaction on the Vidarbha Provincial Congress Committee, but to our surprise, even after the lapse of two weeks, there is no indication of the Provincial Congress Committee giving vent to public opinion on this matter, I was therefore constrained to take the initiative to voice public sentiment as regards the relief measures. The District Congress Committee could not remain an idle spectator, when the peasants throughout the District are agitating and had marched down to Amraoti to place their demands before the Deputy Commissioner. And I hope the public of Amraoti will freely discuss and convey its considered opinion without let or hindrance.

Mr M.D. Deshpande, General Secretary of the Vidarbha Kisan Sabha, in his brief speech, explained the relations between the Congress and the Kisan Sabha and asked the public to remove the misgivings and misunderstanding created by vested interests. He referred to the agrarian programme adopted by the Congress in its Faizpur session and pointed out that the aims and activities of the Sabha were strictly in accordance with it. It would be fatal to dub the Kisan Sabha as anti-Congress when the political situation in the country demanded their co-ordination to

strengthen the anti-imperialist struggle. He admired the bold move taken by the DCC and hoped that the meeting would open a new chapter in the political history of Berar.

Referring to the measure of suspension he said, 'I am pained to find the Congress Ministry treating the steps of the bureaucracy while the peasants are asking for bread, the Congress Ministry has given them stones. By disregarding the election pledges the Ministers are undermining the very prestige of the Congress. Whatever they may do or not, I am confident, most of the peasants are determined to resist all oppressive measures in an organized manner. I am sure our sympathy to their cause would definitely strengthen their struggle'. He therefore, appreciated the bold stand taken by the DCC.

Mr N.B. Bamagaonkar, then moved the following resolution:

In view of the failure of crops, low prices of agricultural commodities and consequent plight of peasants in Berar the relief granted by the Government is inadequate and unsatisfactory. Moreover, it has frustrated all hopes created, since the acceptance of offices by the Congress, in the hearts of peasants. In the circumstances, therefore, the meeting urges the Congress Ministry to reconsider its decision in the light of demands placed before the Government through applications, various Peasants conferences and the Kisan March.

Mr Bamangaonkar said: 'I cannot be accused as anti-ministerialist for I have always believed that whatever power is acquired should be used to promote the welfare of the masses. That is precisely the declaration of the Congress. But my friends in the office seem to be indifferent to this fundamental objective. The relief measure is not only inadequate but ill-advised. It is certainly unbecoming to those who claim to know the condition of the masses'.

Dr Soman, a member of the Provincial Congress Committee, while supporting the resolution considered it to be mild. He severely criticized the Provincial Congress Committee on its failure to take notice of the growing hardships of the peasants. 'If our Ministers are helpless to extend substantial relief to the peasants it would be far better for them and the Congress to withdraw from their offices, he declared.

Mr Ganeshrao Deshmukh, Congress MLA, supporting the resolution remarked that his position was a very difficult one. He could not speak out the whole truth without being exposed to the disciplinary action. He was faced with the choice between truth and disciplinary action and he would give more value to truth than fear the award of disciplinary action. He was convinced that the Ministry was not favourably disposed to take a bold stand unless an intensive agitation is carried on by peasants themselves. He quoted a few instances to show how official reports were exaggerated and incorrect, and he considered it as a disgrace for the Congress Ministry to have placed more reliance on such reports despite the clamour of the responsible Congress organization. He would not hesitate to vacate his seat if the peasants' interests were not properly attended to.

The resolution was unanimously passed.

22. Forward, Andhra Peasants!

By K. Satyanarayana,¹ *Congress Socialist*, 19 February 1939

19 February 1939

Peasants Conferences, peasant marches, and peasant meetings are being held in every district of the Province, since the beginning of this month. In order to rally support to the recommendations of the Prakasani Committee Report. The North Vizag Dt. Zamin Ryots' Conference was held on the 2nd inst. At Kasibugga; the South Vizag Dt. Conference on the 4th Inst. At Chodavarum; the East Godavari Dt. Zamin Ryots' Conference was held at Pithapuram on the 6th inst.; the West

Godavari Dt. Conference at Dharmajigudem on the 7th inst.; the Kistna Dt. Zamin Ryots' Conference was held at Agirapali on the 8th inst.; the Nellore Dt. Ryots' Conference was held at Nellore on the 10th inst.; and the Chittoor Dt. Zamin Ryots' Conference at Ramakrishnarajupet on the 13th inst. Besides these, innumerable Taluka and Firca Conferences have been held in several places, in all of which Socialists, Kisan Sabha workers and some MLAs took active part.

Resolution were passed in these Conferences, congratulating the Prakasam Sub-Committee for its Recommendations, and the following amendments were suggested to be adopted by the Madras Government:

1. The Tenancy Act should be made to come into force from the date of introduction of the Bill into the Legislative Assembly.
2. The act should apply to all proprietary, Zemindari, Mutta etc. areas in the partially excluded areas of the Vizagapatnam and East Godavari Districts.
3. The Act should be extended to all estates as defined in the Madras Estates Land Amendment Act of 1936, that is, all Inams, Agraharams and Mokhas.
4. *Patta*-transfers should be made obligatory.
5. No moveable property of the ryot except the crop on land to which the Land Revenue relates, should be detained for arrears of Land Revenue.
6. When crops fail due to drought or floods or other causes beyond the control of the ryot, the ryot should be given statutory rights for suspension and remission of land reforms.
7. All arrears pending at the time of the commencement of the Act, should be reduced to the amounts due as per the provisions of the Act and other balances should be cancelled.
8. The Government should thoroughly examine the state of the water sources and should execute repairs themselves at the cost of the landholders, within three years of the date on which the Act becomes law. A special engineering commission should be appointed for the purpose in each district and its cost should be realized from the landholders in the district. An irrigation fund should be raised by the Government for each estate from its land revenue, for maintenance and construction of the water sources and irrigation works from year to year.
9. All unsurveyed Estates should be surveyed under the Madras Survey and Boundaries Act of 1923 within one year or the date from which the Act becomes law and public records of Survey and Settlement should be kept. The cost of survey and settlement should not be on the ryots.
10. All communal lands such as burial and burning grounds, cart tracts, donkas, tands, village sites, pasture lands etc should be separated inspite of limitation and clearly noted in the village registers.
11. A minimum extent of forests and hills should be left for the use of the villagers keeping in view their necessity in relation to the land and number of cattle held by them. The ryots should have a right to use the forests and hills for grazing their cattle, fetching fuel and timber for agricultural implements and for collections of leaves etc. for manures. All the forests and hills occupied by the Zamindars or given on pattas should be taken back and set apart for communal purposes.
12. Bought-in lands may be kept by the land-holder (zamindar) until he earns from them an amount equal to the arrears of land revenue for which they were sold, upto a maximum period of three years. After that, lands should be granted on pattas without any compensation to the ryot who held them before the sale.
13. If a portion of a *lanka* gets submerged in the river, it should be assigned to the original pattadar without any compensation when it gets out of water. The ryot should be granted remission of land revenue during the period of the *lanka* being submerged in the river.

Besides these innumerable conferences, each of which attracted thousands of ~~peasants~~ ^{peasants}, several peasant marches and public meetings have been held during the week commencing on the 12th inst.

and ending with the 19th, in accordance with the circular of the Andhra Provincial Ryots Association. More than 16,000 Zamindari peasants from all over the North Vizag Dt. marched to Sompeta under the leadership of Mr G. Latchanna, an active Kisan Sabha worker, and presented their memorandum to the local Tahsildar. Similar marches have been held in Pithapuram, Challapalli, Munagala, Bobbili, and other estates. Public meetings were held in several villages, in which the demands of the peasantry were popularized. The enthusiasm of the Kisans of the enactment of the Tenancy Bill knows no bounds.

¹ Satyanarayana, Kambhampati: b. 1908, at Doddavaram, Razole Taluk of East Godavari district, Andhra Pradesh. Resident of Vijayawada and son of Somanadham; passed his MA (History and Economics) from Madras University; worked as a journalist and was a member of Communist Party of India; jailed for participating in Civil Disobedience movement in 1931 but released due to Gandhi-Irwin Pact. During 1939 he was interned at Tum for anti-war propaganda. Edited, published and distributed banned Telugu periodicals like *Rana Dundubhi*, *Vira Bharati*, etc. during Civil Disobedience movement; Served on the editorial boards of *Sandesam*, *Navasakthi*, *Prajasakthi* and *Visalandhara*; author of Telugu works like *Soviet Union To-day*, *Dialectical Materialism*, *Kashmir*, etc.; translated various works of Lenin, Stalin; author of *A Study of the History and Culture of Andhras*, associated with Andhra Pradesh Official Language Commission from March 1976.

23. 'Have Halis Been Freed'?

Indulal Yajnik's article in *Congress Socialist*, 19 February 1939

The Hali movement was really inaugurated by the Kisan Sabha and Kisan Marchers at the Haripura Congress.

Weeks before the Congress met, the Kisan Workers carried the slogan of the Halis' freedom to distant areas of the Surat district. The three thousand and odd Kisans who marched to Haripura filled the air of the Congress camp with resounding shouts of 'End Hali Slavery'. Yet all the response, they got were unbecoming abuses from Pate.

We were however gratified to see that, as an astute political realist the Sardar quickly perceived the necessity of tackling the problem. How could this system of slavery, condemned by sun-dried British bureaucrats, be condoned for a minute longer in the sacred air of Bardoli after it had been so ruthlessly exposed before all assembled at the Congress? He denounced the Hali System in moving terms and set about the job of releasing them. And now, the Sardar has announced and agreed scheme of emancipation with the blessings of Gandhi.

I regret however to state that the detailed scheme as announced at Bardoli on 26th January, falls far short of a true declaration of Halis' freedom. Indeed one may say that in spite of the best wishes of the distinguished leaders the chains of slavery might be more securely clapped round Halis' necks.

The Halis would indeed be glad to learn that those saddled with debts of 12 years or longer duration would be free to leave their masters—Dhantamas at their will. So would also be Halis working away their fathers' debts by service. But how many Halis would there be, who would not have borrowed few rupees—or who would not be proved debtors according to their masters' account books during the last few years? Obviously then, only a few, if any, would breathe the air of freedom under the Bardoli Pact.

What then about the vast majority indebted to their masters? They are, under the rules bound hand and took to the chain of their old masters' slavery. They will, no doubt receive a fixed wage of 4½ annas—a few will get the annual salary of Rs 80. But this wage might be given in cash or grain. The Hali might receive wages only when he is employed, while formerly his food, miserable as it was, and clothing etc., were provided by the masters. From a strictly mathematical point of view, the Hali might not gain more than before.

On the other hand the new scheme enables the master to cut down the wage by one anna in repayment of his debt. What is more, the Hali is morally bound as he was not until now—to serve the old master in lieu of old debts. While some money might thus be paid off would not some more be lent to him too, to meet his occasional social expenses? Would he then even be a free man, free like other men to engage in labour for anyone on agreed terms?

The crux of the matter is centred on the old or recent debts of Halis. The Sardar has treated debts of less than 12 years' duration as sacrosanct and elaborated a plan that would keep Halis in eternal, though somewhat refined, slavery for ever. The Kisan Sabha holds that all debts of Halis be treated as cancelled for two reasons.

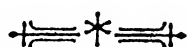
Firstly, Halis have been enslaved for generations past by their peasant masters. Taking therefore a long range of view of all accounts. It may be justly said that all debts, old and new have been paid off by the sweated and slavish labours of present Halis and their forebears.

Secondly, I suggest that all loans granted to Halis should be deemed to have been advanced for the immoral and inhuman purpose of enslaving them for life. Thus these should be treated on a par with loans given for promoting gambling or prostitution and deemed as irrecoverable from the debtors.

Suppose however that some debts are to be deemed just and operative. But are any other debtors bound to work for their creditors? Why should the Halis then be bound to obediently work for their masters to pay off their debts? Why can't they work anywhere according to their will and remain free like all others to pay their debts if and when they like?

There is only one human solution of the problem. Let us give back to the Halis their inalienable liberty of labour and contract. And let the masters be free to take all legal measures to recover their debts. They will have to thank their own dishonest and immoral motives if they could not recover their dues from the poor assets and low wages of their debtors.

Unfortunately the high motives of Sardar and Gandhiji have not been carried out in the charter announced by them. It remains for the Halis use the great announcement as a spring-board to secure by dint of their own unity and solidarity, their complete and unconditional freedom to live and labour even as their brethren have wrought their freedom in Magrol and Mandavi, benefit for them. Even the district Magistrate of Gaya has accepted that they would not get any benefit through law courts. What is then there for the *kisans* left? The government stands for the zamindars and for the *kisan*, it is only a weapon to dislodge them, to expropriate them. Rameshwar, the zamindar of Reora was approached with all possible and reasonable terms but he did not move. Officials' and non-officials' pressures proved futile and he was adamant. What was the choice left to the *kisans* but to fight with their lives to save their lives. *Satyagraha* started as a result. The fight for the existence of the hungry and the dying met governmental repressions. The *kisan* were terrorised by Gurkhas and police before they started *Satyagraha*. The terrorising had no effect and the *kisans* moved forward. We were then arrested for theft and the *kisans* were also not spared. A mean tactic was adopted to threaten their just and right move of *Satyagraha* by picking up a few out of them. It was freely argued that the arrests were made in the sacred name of law and order. One will laugh at the idea when one finds that the upholders of law and order have not been able to come to its rescue in Reora. The whole village is doing the same what the few who have been arrested have done. In the situation the arrest of few speaks of the spirit of vengeance and vindictiveness of those in power.



24. Reora Kisans Win

Kisan Satyagraha in Reora, *Congress Socialist*, 26 February 1939

26 February 1939

News has come that the Kisan Satyagraha in Reora has succeeded in obtaining a settlement of the dispute. It will be recalled that the Kisans made repeated efforts to negotiate a settlement which were frustrated by the intransigence of the Zamindars concerned.

The background of the Satyagraha was given in an article by Farid Ansari published in a recent issue of the *Congress Socialist*. The struggle was about the ownership of land in Reora Village. An enquiry committee appointed by Comrade Jayaprakash Narayan reported that 850 bighas of the of the Bakshat lands belonged to the Kisans and the rest to the Zamindars. No settlement with the latter could however be reached on that basis. The Bihar Government was approached to settle the dispute but to no purpose.

Instead of getting any help from the Government, the Kisans were faced with the promulgation of the section 144 CrPC. The only honourable reply that the peasants could give under such circumstances was to resort to Satyagraha and this they did under the intrepid leadership of Sjt Jadunandan Sharma.

On 20 December 1938 paddy crop from the disputed fields was cut by the Kisans in defiance of Sec. 145 CrPC. Sjt Sharma was later arrested on the charge of theft and was sentenced to six months' imprisonment. The incarceration of the leader only spurred the brave Kisans to further determined opposition to the zamindars' expropriatory designs. And they have won at last.

The protracted negotiations carried on by Comrade Jayaprakash Narayan and other Kisan leaders have borne fruit. The Zamindars have been given possession over 118 acres while the remaining 500 acres will be distributed among the 133 Kisan families.

Comrade Jadunandan Sharma is reported to have approved of the settlement and has also undertaken to distribute the lands among the Kisans. We hope Comrade Sharma will be released soon to put through his work of distributing the land.

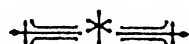
The Reora Kisan deserve our warmest congratulations on their magnificent victory. May we hope that they will further their strength and solidarity by refusing to fragment the 500 acres into individual holdings and decide to cultivate them collectively and thus teach yet another lesson to the rest of India and assure their place permanently in the vanguard of India's Kisan movement.

25. Muthra Kisans

Resolutions of the Muthra Kisans, *Hindustan Times*, 5 March 1939

Muthra
5 March 1939

Under the presidentship of Thakur Malkhan Singh MLA, of Aligarh, the village Mandal Conference was held in Ahera village in Muthra district, on February 26th and 27th, Hakim Brajlal Verman Swami Raghubir Saran, Chaudhry Shiva Mangal Singh, MLA, and Mr Kedar Nath Bhargava attended the conference. Resolutions demanding the abolition of the Zamindari system, opposition to the Federation, the formation of the National Militia, permission to Raja Mahendra Pratap to return to India, the reduction of the irrigation rate and redressal of the grievances of Kisans against the Canal Department etc. were unanimously adopted.



26. Extract from the weekly confidential report of the District Magistrate, Kaira, 9 March 1939

Weekly Confidential Report of D.M. Kaira, File No. 937 (6) pt. 1/1939, Home Dept., Maharashtra State Archives

5 March 1939

A panch of the Baraiyas of 242 villages had assembled at Ras on 26 February 1939 and representatives of 25 to 30 villages were present. Mr Ashabhai Lallubhai Patel of Ras was voted to the Chair. The Panch passed a resolution agreeing to take back into the caste those Baraiyas of Ras who had been excommunicated because of their refusal to return to the original owners of the lands at Ras, which had been forfeited and which they had purchased from Government. Mr Ashabhai further advised them that their past actions should be forgiven and that all should henceforth live in peace and harmony.

Mr Vallabhbhai Jhaverbhai Patel paid a visit to Dhundakuva and Rupuapura on his way to Ras on 28 February 1939. He expressed his joy at Dhundakuva and Rupiapura at the restoration of forfeited lands to their former holders. He exhorted the audience to live in peace and harmony and to assimilate the principles for which the Congress stood.

Mr Vallabhbhai was led in a procession through the decorated streets of Ras. A meeting of about 20,000 persons was held on that day at about 2 p.m. Messrs Narhari Dwarkadas Parikh, Gokaldas Dwarkadas, Talati, Darbar Gopaldas and Mrs Bhaktilaxmi Desai were present. Mr Vallabhbhai delivered a lecture in which he reminded the people about his visit to Ras in 1930 in connection with Mahatma Gandhi's Dandi March and his arrest from the midst of the people who had collected to hear his speech. This incident, he said, had infuriated the people who thereupon had taken up the no-tax campaign and allowed their lands to be forfeited and sold to out-siders. Some Muslims who did not understand the principles of the campaign and some Baraiyas who had no bread to eat, had purchased the lands, which have, however, recently reverted to the original owners. He advised the people not to keep at a distance those who had committed the above mistake. These should, on the other hand, be assimilated. They were celebrating their success in the campaign but they should not be led into the illusion that they had attained Swarajya. He advised the people of Ras that they should see that no dispute of theirs was taken to a court of Law, that they did not pay even a paise to the Lawyers or spend their money in the purchase of court-fee stamps; that no one drank liquor and that the Harijans were not kept at a distance.

27. Kisan March at Tripuri

Kisan March at Tripuri led by Sahajanand, *Bombay Chronicle*, 10 March 1939

9 March 1939

Ten thousand Kisan marchers led by Swami Sahajanand, President, Prof. N.G. Ranga, General Secretary, and Mr Indulal Yajnik, Joint Secretary of the All India Kisan Committee, entered Tripuri in a procession from Gaurighat and assembled under the presidency of Swami Sahajanand at Jhanda Chowk.

A special message from President Subhas Chandra Bose welcoming the marchers, appealing to the Kisans to join whole heartedly the coming struggle and make the greatest sacrifice and assuring them that the nation and the Congress will be grateful to the suffering peasants, who will throw themselves heart and soul in the sacred task of the national liberation, was read out to the gathering.

Swami Sahajanand put in a powerful plea for abolition of 'Malguzari' and 'Shahukari' systems and asserted that the Kisan Sabha would not be satisfied until all the Kisans were freed from the present poverty and real full Panchayat Raj established for ensuring the happiness of Kisans Mazdoors.

Prof. Ranga welcomed the demonstration of the marchers which was another unmistakable proof for complete independence. He observed that the Kisans were unconcerned with the divisions in the leadership of the Congress but they were determined to stand by the Congress to enable it to achieve salvation of the country.

28. Abolish Zamindari System: All-India Kisan Committee's Demand

Resolutions of the All India Kisan Committee, *Bombay Chronicle*, 10 March 1939

10 March 1939

The following are some of the resolutions passed by the All-India Committee at its meeting on Tuesday:

Whereas the UP, Bihar, Andhra and Tamil Nadu provinces, subject to the Zamindari system have already decided in their provincial political conferences held under the auspices of the Congress in favour of the abolition of the Zamindari system, the political conference of the one remaining zamindars' province i.e., Bengal has also, by this resolution, demanded the abolition of the vicious system, thereby setting the seal of approval of most of the provinces affected by the Zamindari system upon the Kisan demand for the abolition of all kinds of landlordism.

The Committee therefore requests the Congress assembled at Tripuri to declare for the immediate abolition of the Zamindari Malguzari, Talukdari, Zenmi, Khoti and other forms of landlordism, not only with a view to relieving the condition of the oppressed Kisans, but also to intensifying the impending fight against Federation and Imperialism.

This Committee is shocked at the failure of the British Government to give its assent to the Estates Land Act Amendment Bill of Orissa which was passed more than 14 months ago by the Orissa Assembly and urges the Orissa Ministry to demand that the Bill be forthwith made an Act and appeals to Congress and Kisan organisations in the Province to carry on an intensive propaganda for the immediate passing of the Act.

This Committee heartily congratulates Pandit Jadunandan Sharma and the Kisans of Reora on their recent victory over their zamindars by dint of the unparalleled peaceful resistance organized by them and their women and children. The Committee urges the Bihar Ministry to release all Kisan prisoners including their leaders Jadunandan Sharma immediately from jail, as their continued incarceration would not only endanger the settlement but also, violates the fundamental rights of peasants to struggle peacefully for their legitimate demands...

29. Gujarat Kisans

From an article by Indulal Yajnik, *National Front*, 12 March 1939

... An urgent call from Lavet in Baroda State helped us to stage a grand rehearsal of our new campaign. There the tenants decided on a rent-strike to avail themselves of the local Rent Restriction Act. Reinforced by our Debt Cancellation campaign, Lavet Kisans boldly adopted our twin slogans, 'Hold your crops,' and 'Hold your lands.' Aided by the Halis of the area, Lavet passed through a fiery ordeal to secure eventually a substantial reduction in rents throughout the whole Mangrol taluka.

Like Whirlwind

Lavet and Mangrol woke up the Kisans and Halis of the adjoining *Mandavi* taluka in the Surat district. The no-rent campaign of our Baroda village overran like a whirlwind, a whole sector of the Bombay taluka. The exigencies of the situation gave first place to the rent struggle. No debt campaign followed in its wake. Here again some Raniparaj peasants and their leaders were jailed on irrelevant charges. But the Kisans' feet are firmly set on the path that must lead to victory.

A little later, in September–October last year, the small taluka of Kalol in the Panch Mahals District was agog with the novel no-rent and no-debt campaigns. The militant Baraiya peasants, so unlike the emotional but weak Raniparaj Kisans of Mandvi and Mangrol came from far and near to hear our new gospel of deliverance:

'Your rents are excessive; withhold these till your landlords agree to reduce them. And why starve to pay any debts till 31 March 1939 when neither your lands nor your poor produce could be attached even, in execution of decrees? Rid yourselves of the fear of Sahukars and landlords and all will be well with you.'

Inspired by new faith and hope, the peasants adopted our advice and saved their ground-nut crop from the claws of their masters. Their new-found unity and courage surprised everybody. The bosses retreated without striking a blow. And today reduced rents are being gladly accepted by the defeated landlords in village after village while nothing is being paid or promised in payment of hateful debts.

Sahukari terrorism, so common in South Gujarat is dead in these villages. No rent or eviction suits have been filed so far. Nobody has been jailed. Every thing proceeds quite peacefully. The men and women are overjoyed at the retention of their valuable crops in farms and huts. They are feeding and dressing better. They have scotched the devil of Drink. And freed from the Sahukari terror, they are nursing their agricultural and social pursuits with joy and hope.

30. Report on Political Events in Bihar During the Second half of March 1939

Hallet papers, Acc. No. 3948, NAI

15 March 1939

...The All India Kisan Conference is to be held at Gaya on the 9th and 10th of this month. Swami Sahajanand has stood down and Acharya Narendra Dev is likely to be unanimously elected as President. The Swami and his lieutenants have been devoting themselves to collecting funds for the conference and have managed to induce a number of zamindars and others to contribute. The Swami in his recent speeches has been extremely critical of Mr Gandhi and the Gandhian party of the Congress and Sheo Shankar Bharti in a speech at Gaya advised the Ministry and their officials not to invite the boiling pan by harassing Kisans and not to forget how their conferences in Russia suffered 20 years ago. As reported in my last report Kisans' agitation over *Bakasht* lands is spreading. There have been fresh incidents of forcible crop cutting at Muriar in Shahabad; at Amuari (Saran) the police have had to harvest the crops, though *satyagraha* there is flogging, and there are reports of other similar disputes being started up elsewhere in the district. In Darbhanga also trouble shows signs of spreading rather rapidly and possible Kisan Sabha electioneering for District Board elections is partly responsible. Arbitration has failed both in the Deokuli and Raghupur disputes and the District Magistrate is now ordering all cases to be taken up and dealt with under section 145 of the Criminal Procedure Code. Throughout the Patna Division there are numerous reports of landlords refusing to divide and the *muffasil* police have their hands full with division of crops

on the spot. This has averted breaches of the peace and prevented litigation, but has imposed a great strain on the force. In the Bhagalpur and Chota Nagpur Divisions rent and land revenue payments have also been much affected. The District officers of Bhagalpur, Purnea and the Santal Pergana all report difficulties in the collection of rents...

31. Communist Day

Intelligence Branch Reports, Deputy-Commissioner of Police, Calcutta, March-May 1939, Microfilm (4), NAI

I.R. 7834 M.A. Rasul,¹ General Secretary of the BPKC, has written to the Kisans Samities
17 March 1939 at Pabna, Khulna, Barisal, Chittagong, Birbhum and Mymensingh to celebrate the above day (vide para 234) by holding meetings and demonstrations of all anti-imperialist organisations in their districts to demand the removal by the Government of India of the ban on the CPI. For this they should also prepare a statement for submission to the Government of India and for publication in the press. Their demands should be as follows: (i) Legalization of the CPI, (ii) restoration of full civil liberties, (iii) release of all labour, peasant and political prisoners (including those in the Native States), (iv) withdrawal of section 144 CrPC and BCLA Act from the Burdwan district, (v) withdrawal of all repressive laws and measures and (vi) pressure on the Government of India by Congress ministries to legalize the CPI.

G.L. 199 Members of the Manicktolla Communist Party are reported to have decided at
18 March 1939 38/1 Manicktolla Main Road on 15 March 1939 to celebrate this day by holding the following meetings and processions:
(i) Bidi workers' meeting at 2 Gas Street with procession to the Monument.
(ii) Labourers' meeting at Sethbagan Maidan Manicktolla with procession to Deshbandhu Park.
(iii) A public meeting at Deshbandhu Park with procession to the Monument.
(iv) A mass meeting at the monument.
In this connection Kamal Sen (CPI) is said to have ordered a Bengali leaflet to be printed for circulation over the names of the Socialist Party, Bidi Workers' Union...

292. Peasant Conferences

(b) Rangpur

I.R. 7990 Dinesh Lahiri, Secretary of the Rangpur District Kisan Committee has asked
20 March 1939 Abdulla Rasool, General Secretary BPKC to induce Niharendu Dutta Mazumdar and Bankim Mukharji to attend the Rangpur District Kisan Conference (February para. 422(c) to be held on 25 March 1939 and 26 March 1939. He has also asked the Secretary of the 24 Parganas Kisan Committee to send two delegates in the Conference. Niharendu's presence, it is pointed out, is essential, as he has been elected a delegate from Rangpur to the AIKC. Conference in Gaya (vide para 289) and his voters would like to see him in person.

Secret

392. Peasant Conferences

(a) Rangpur

C 149
25 March 1939 Benoy Bagchi (E.D.) of 21, Bechu Chatarji Street, is reported to be distributing leaflets announcing the holding of the Rangpur District Kisan Conference at Chandanpat, PS Kaligunge, on 25 March 1939 and 26 March 1939 (vide February para 422(c)).

Bani Bagchi (E.D.) is reported to have left on 23 March 39 for the conference, with money collected from Nirmal Bhattacharji and his wife Kalyani (nee Das M.D.). He has also taken with him some posters and leaflets.

Secret

295. BPKC

I.R.11232
19 April 1939 Abdul Mansur Habibullah,¹ Secretary, BPKC has issued leaflets announcing (i) the observance of 'All Bengal Kisan Day' on 23 April 1939 (vide para. 278), (ii) the holding of the BPKC conference at Maldah on 15 April 1939, nominations for the precidium to reach the BPKC office by 5 May 1939, and (iii) the election of delegates and members on 30 April 1939, on the basis of one member for every 200 general members and one delegate for every 100 members.

Habibullah has also asked the Secretary, Maldah District Kisan Committee to submit a report on the successful agitation in Chanchal for publication in the *National Front*.

I.R. 13741

147. BPKC

9 May 1939 It is reported that Dharendra Kumar Sarkar, Secretary, Pabna District Kisan Samity has written to the Secretary Bengal Provincial Kisan Committee stating that inspite of the opposition by the Muslim Leaguers, the Kisan Committee of Pabna District has been carrying on its work amongst the peasants and are in urgent need of some Muslim workers for propaganda work among the Muslim residents there.

C 193

171. BPKC—Maldah

9 May 1939 It is reported that Muzaffar Ahmiad (CPMI, ED) has been selected to preside over the Peasants' Conference of the Maldah District which is to be held at Maldah on the 20th and 21st May 1939.

20.

BPKC

C.116
29 May 1939 It is reported that at a meeting of the party held at 27B, Gangadhar Babu Lane, Calcutta on 28 May 1939 resolutions were adopted condemning the suppression of the legitimate demands of the peasants by the Government especially in Barisal,

Faridpur, Pabna, Malda and Rangpur; urging the peasants to launch an agitation for the redress of their grievances; and requesting Government to cancel all previous debts and arrear rents.

The district Kisan Committees are said to have been asked to organize study circles among the local peasants.

¹ Abdullah Rasul (1903–91); hailed from Burdwan, he joined a petty Government job after leaving school, and left the job in 1921 to take part in the Non-Cooperation movement. Imprisoned in 1922, he came later to Lahore in 1926 to study Islamic history and religion for 3 years. Soon he started contributing articles to newspapers and periodicals. Joined the Civil Disobedience movement in 1930, and was jailed in 1932. On release, he edited *Comrade* (weekly) for a number of years. In 1938 Rasul joined the Communist Party of India, and became involved in the Kisan movement. Elected General Secretary, Bengal Provincial Kisan Sabha, he became a Provincial Committee member of the CPI in 1939. Engaged in the Kisan movement in Bengal and elsewhere, Rasul emerged a leading figure in the momentous Tebhaga movement (1946–47) in Bengal. It was in 1947 that he was chosen the General Secretary of All India Kisan Sabha. Between 1948 and 1951 (during the left adventurist phase of the Communist movement in India) he went underground, and thereafter to jail. In 1959 Rasul was in the forefront of the Food Movement in Bengal, suffering imprisonment. He was detained once again in 1962 at the time of the Sino-Indian conflict. In 1964 Rasul joined the Communist Party of India (Marxist), and became its Central Committee member in 1982. He was MLA from 1960 to 1969, and served as the Transport minister in the first and second United Front Government in West Bengal. A bachelor, and a sensitive intellectual, Rasul wrote two significant political novels, *Shahar Theke Grame* and *Abad*, apart from writing *The History of the All India Kisan Sabha*, *Shantal Rebellions* (in Bengali) and valuable articles on culture and Marxian economy.

² Abdul Mansur Habibullah, Sayed: Born in Burdwan and educated in St. Xavier's College and Scottish College, he obtained MS LLB from Calcutta University Law College. A member of CPI and a founder-member of Bengal Provincial Kisan Sabha, he was imprisoned in 1942 and during 1949–52 in East-Pakistan. He was the Assistant Editor of *Matanat* (weekly) and a lecturer at Suri Vidyasagar College and Surendranath Law College. Later he was elected a member of the West Bengal Legislative Assembly in 1962 as CPI candidate, and in 1971 as CPI(M) candidate. In 1977 he was unanimously elected as Speaker of the House.

32. Whirlwind of Struggle Sweeps on

Abdul Halim,¹ *National Front*, 19 March 1939

19 March 1939

A peasants' fight has been taking place for many months at only a distance of 100 miles from Calcutta, but the story of this struggle has not reached the ears of the people in general.

On 24th February, I went to Nonur—a village of historical fame, the birthplace of Chandidas, the great poet and social reformer who lived centuries ago. My purpose in going to this village was to attend the Birbhum District Peasants' Conference which was to be presided over by Com. Sebati Burman, a noted Kisan Sabha leader.

On my arrival at Nonur I was informed by a batch of Comrades and some peasants who had come to attend the Conference that in a village named Darpashila, situated along the E.I.R. Loophole, the peasants had been putting up a stiff fight for one whole year against the oppressive zamindar of the locality. After the Conference, which went off successively having passed a list of resolutions asking for the stoppage of illegal exactions, reduction in rents and debts and interest, demanding abolition of the zamindari system and calling for struggle against the Federation. I hastened on to witness the struggle of the peasants of Darpashila. Undertaking the strain of the journey, which was done on bullock carts, railway train and on foot, was rather risky for me as I had a temperature of 102, with plaster protecting the left side of my chest from pain as I have been victim of pleurisy for many long years. But thoughts of the brave struggle of the peasants of Darpashila drew me on.

The population of this village is composed of 200 families, among whom are some Santhals who are virtually land-slaves. The landlord of this village is one Golakpati Ghosh of the same

village who is notorious for his harsh and inhuman treatment. He is, in fact, not a real Zamindar, but a lease holder or Darpattanidar of Nityanagan Bannerji, Zamindar of Lalpur also a tyrant who has to his credit the authorship of a book entitled 'Russia to-day' written after a 7 days journey in the USSR! The present struggle organized in an incident in June 1938. Golakpati Ghosh the Darpattanidar arrested on flimsy charge a peasant named Sibu Singh, along with his wife, forcibly had him removed to his Kutchery and there had him mercilessly beaten. The Zamindars here realize rent but do not give receipts, exact illegal dues, there is no end of rack-renting and heavy interest charges are prevalent. The peasants tried to get proceedings instituted against the zamindar under Sec. 107, to stop his malpractices but to no effect. Sibu Singh's arrest lit the torch of struggle. Even the most oppressed section of the peasants—the landless Santhals—have joined the struggle. When we arrived great enthusiasm prevailed. On 25th February last a huge meeting was held, about 3000 peasants participating, several having come from the adjoining villages. All of us comrades who had come on from the recent Birbhum Peasants' Conference, addressed the gathering exhorting the peasants to fight as their cause was just and their demands essential for their lives. Numerous peasant speakers themselves lucidly explained the reasons for their struggle. What excited the greatest interest was when two Santhals named Sukul Majhi, and Solen Majhi spoke on their grievances and their demands. This is a sure indication that the most oppressed stratum of the peasants is joining the ranks of Kisan warriors. The whirlwind of peasants struggle is sweeping onwards.

The Birbhum peasants are stirring up vigorously. A District Kisan Sabha has been formed which will be capable of organizing their movement and giving a correct lead.

¹ Abdul Halim (1901–66); born in a poor family, he started life as a junior shipping clerk. Largely self educated in Bengali and English, he left his job to join the Non-Cooperation movement, and was imprisoned for six months. On release he came in touch with Muzaffar Ahmed, and by July 1922 he started aiding Muzaffar and Abdur Rezzak Khan in building up Communist movement in Bengal. At the same time he associated himself with the radical organs like *Lungal* (of Kazi Nazrul Islam) and *Ganabani* (of Muzaffar Ahmed). Soon he turned into a leading figure of the Workers and Peasants Party in Bengal, and became its acting General Secretary in 1926. In 1927 he was elected a member of the Central Executive Committee of the Communist Party of India. When the Labour and Communist leaders were arrested in the Meerut Conspiracy Case, Halim was prominent among those who campaigned for their release. Simultaneously he contributed to the founding of trade unions in and around Calcutta, and was instrumental in organizing workers in the railways, tramways and in the jute mills. He was also a vigorous publicist throughout the 1930s and 1940s, writing in both Bengali and Hindi. Imprisoned several times in colonial and independent India, he was elected to the Bengal Legislative Council in 1952. In his later years Halim preferred to devote himself mainly to Communist Party publications, and to discussions on Marxian ideological issues.

33. Kisan Affairs

From the *Kisan Bulletin* of the All-India Kisan Sabha, 17 March 1939, *National Front*, 19 March 1939

All India Kisan Committee meeting at Tripuri (March 7–8)

A meeting of the All India Kisan Committee was held at 1.30 p.m. on March 7th and 8th under the presidentship of Sahajanand Saraswati. Among those present were Bharati Devi Ranga, N.G. Ranga, General Secretary AIKS, B.P.L. Bedi, Awadesh Prasad and Indulal Yajnik, Joint Secretaries, AIKS, P.D. Marathe (CP Marathi) and Jamaluddin Bukhari.

Some American journalists and sympathisers of the Indian Movement including Mrs Frederick Fisher and Miss F. Mary Barr as well as Mulkraj Anand, Pandit Mohanlal Gautam, Secretary, UP Kisan Sangh, P. Narayanan Nair, President, All Malabar Peasants Union, Adhikari Sardesai and

other Kisan comrades from various provinces also attended the meeting. The last two resolutions bearing on the organisation of the Sabha, adopted by the Committee are given first:

Election Time-Table

In view of the representations made by various provincial Kisan Sabhas, the Committee decides to extend the date of the election of delegates upto 20th March and the election of the members of the AIKC and President to 27th March and the Committee trusts the General Secretary will expedite the publication of the names of the persons proposed for the presidentship and announcement of the results of the election.

The committee further requests the Provincial Secretaries to send the proposals for presidentship and results of the election to the General Secretary to the following telegraphic address: RANGA, ASSEMBLY, NEW DELHI.

UP Kisan Sangh

This Committee welcomes the decision of the UPK Sangh to affiliate itself to the AIKS and accepts its application for the same.

The rest of the important resolutions adopted by the Committee are given below:

Abolition of Zamindari and Malguzari Systems

This Committee accords its hearty congratulations to the Congressmen of Bengal for adopting a far reaching resolution on the Agrarian problem at the provincial political conference that was held recently at Jalpaiguri (February 5) which not only invited the cooperation of all progressive organisations in the province to cooperate with Congress Committees in launching a vigorous campaign but also to popularise the agreed demands of the impoverished peasants in the following words:- 'In order to relieve the peasants and remove their grievances, the Conference also urges the *abolition of the permanent and all the zamindari systems in the province.*'

Whereas the UP, Bihar and Tamil Nadu provinces, subject to the Zamindari system have already decided in their provincial political conferences held under the auspices of the Congress in favour of the abolition of the Zamindari system, the political conference of the one remaining Zamindari province i.e., Bengal has also, by this resolution, demanded the abolition of this vicious system, thereby setting the seal of approval of most of the provinces affected by the Zamindari system upon the Kisan demand for the abolition of all kinds of landlordism.

The Committee believes that these systems have been promoted and maintained by the British Government with the set purpose of helping in exploiting and terrorising the people, and that the Zamindars, Talukdars, Malguzars, etc., have become notorious allies of the Imperialist system of exploitation and oppression. The Committee is convinced that the millions of our Kisans would be enabled to play their decisive role in the impending national struggle more effectively if they are simultaneously inspired and mobilised to overthrow the yoke of feudal slavery imposed upon them by their immediate oppressors.

The Committee, therefore, requests the INC assembled at Tripuri to declare for the immediate abolition of the Zamindari, Malguzari, Talukdari, Zenmi, Khoti and other forms of landlordism, not only with a view to relieving the condition of the oppressed Kisans, but also to intensifying the impending fight against Federation and Imperialism.

Madras Zamindari Report

This Committee deplores the failure of the Madras Estates Land Enquiry Committee appointed by the Legislature to recommend the abolition of the Zamindari System but welcomes its decision in favour of our Kisans contention that the absolute right over all their ponds, tanks and other

irrigation sources, communal properties, forests etc., vests in the peasantry and also in favour of reducing rents to the level of those prevailing in 1802. This Committee takes particular notice of the statement of the Madras Premier that the Zamindars are only public functionaries and therefore, they could be dismissed in the same way as any other Government Servants. The Committee draws the attention of all Congress Ministries and the public to the fact that the Zamindars are not only not useful and needed but also distinctly harmful and wasteful and have caused and are causing untold misery to the millions of our peasantry and therefore ought to be removed from their position as rent and revenue collectors and that the guardianship over irrigation and drainage works and forests and other natural and national resources must be removed from them without the slightest delay and vested in the State.

Estates Land Amendment Bill of Orissa

This Committee is shocked at the failure of the British Government to give its assent to the Estates Land Act Amendment Bill of Orissa which was passed more than 14 months ago by the Orissa Assembly and urges the Orissa Ministry to demand that the Bill be forthwith made Act and appeals to Congress and Kisan organisations in the Province to carry on an intensive propaganda for the immediate passing of the Act.

Bihar Land Struggle

This Committee heartily congratulates Yadunandan Sharma and the Kisans of Reora on their recent victory over their Zamindars by dint of unparalleled peaceful resistance organised by them and their women and children. The Committee urges the Bihar Ministry to release all Kisan prisoners including their leader Yadunandan Sharma immediately from jail as their continued incarceration would not only endanger the settlement but also violates the fundamental right of peasants to struggle peacefully for their legitimate demands, the right which has been recognised by the INC.

The Committee, in particular, is shocked at the inhuman reign of terror and daylight robbery to which thousands of Kisans and Kisan workers of Barahiya Tal are subjected from day to day under the very nose of officials. The Committee accords its hearty congratulations to them and their leader Pandit Karyanand Sharma on the exemplary courage and discipline with which they are conducting their struggle peacefully in face of serious provocation. The Committee views with deep sorrow the emigration of hundreds of Kisans. Men, women and children from their villages from which they are being virtually hounded out by continuous loot and assaults. The Committee extends its full sympathy and support to these brave Kisan fighters and exhorts the Bihar Government to take immediate steps to reinstate them in their homes and lands.

This Committee extends its hearty greetings and support to those Kisans who are engaged in a life and death struggle to retain possession of their so-called Bakasht lands at Barahia Tal (Monhgyr Dt.) Dekuli Dham and Reghavpur (Darbhanga Dt.), Annawari (Saran Dt.), Muria (Shahaba Dt.) and other areas all over Bihar under the leadership of the Bihar Kisan Sabha in face of the Zamindari goondaism. Police and Military terror, lathi charges, arrests and imprisonments to which they have been subjected during the past few months.

The Committee hopes that Reora will serve as a beacon light to all the other Kisans of Bihar and other provinces who are engaged in similar struggles till the peaceful possession of their lands is restored to them.

The Committee denounces the reign of oppression and terrorism inaugurated by the Zamindars and their hirelings at Barahiya Tal and other places in Bihar. In particular, it condemns the mean and cowardly attack made on the well-known scholar Rehul Sankrityayan and other peaceful

Kisans and Kisan workers engaged in these struggles by the Zamindars and their men and the police. This Committee demands the immediate release of Rahul Sankrityayan and other Kisan and Labour workers arrested in their struggles and calls for a searching inquiry into these incidents and demands exemplary punishment for the goondas and officials responsible for these outrages.

The Committee is convinced that the so-called Bakasht laws and other measures taken so far will not solve the vexed problem. The Committee urges the Bihar Government to accord peaceful possession of these lands to the Kisans and take all necessary action in the matter in close consultation with the Bihar Kisan Sabha to accord necessary security and relief to the affected Kisans.

Day to Day Struggle

The Committee is gratified to find that following the classic example set by the Bihar Kisan Sabha, the Sabhas of Andhra, Bengal, Gujarat, Punjab, CP, Berar, Malabar and other provinces have begun to initiate day-to-day struggles for possession of lands, withholding or reducing payments of rents, revenues, debts and other charges abolishing forced labour and redressing other grievances. The Committee trusts that such struggles will soon be extended and intensified in all the provinces and will enable the Sabhas to enroll more members, from volunteer corps and otherwise lay deep the foundations of a powerful movement in the country.

Struggles in South India

This Committee congratulates the Kisans of Munagala in Andhra on their triumph in forcing the Zamindar to give up forced labour, to pay regular and proper wages to kisans and workers for every bit of work taken from them and to abstain from obstructing rural traffic along the traditional village paths and roads and sends its greetings to all those hundreds of brave Kisans who have heroically suffered arrests, imprisonments, looting, torture and another kinds of goondaism on the part of the landlord and provided consistent and timely leadership to their fellow Kisans during these times.

This Committee pays its heartfelt homage to the late Nagamma the heroic Kisan woman of Tsadum of Chitoor District who was cruelly done to death by the hooligans of some of the local *sahukars* and landlords and commends her great devotion and sacrifices to all Kisan womanhood for emulation.

This Committee congratulates the Tsadum Kisans on their great and persistent fight against their exploiters despite the hooliganism and violence of landlords and the corruption and partiality of the local officials and apathy of the Ministry and condemns the goondaism of the local landlords and *sahukars* and the collusion in it of some of the local officials in making murderous attacks on the person of the brave Kisan leader Subramaniam who as a result sustained grievous injuries and congratulates Subramaniam and other Kisan workers on their dauntless stand for Kisan rights.

This Committee welcomes the successful attempt of the self sacrificing and comradely Kisans of Tsadum who have, on the refusal of the landlords to lease out their lands to them, distributed their own lands among themselves, both to landed and landless and thus solved the problem of unemployment and commends their example to all other suffering Kisans of other places.

Kisan Movement in Malabar

This Committee welcomes the rise of a vigorous and well organised Kisan movement in Malabar, and accords its fullest support to the All Malabar Peasants Union to end the vicious Jenmi System. The Committee notes with grave concern the processes of coercion and repression set in motion by the local officials to crush the Kisan movement there. Over 200 Kisan workers have been arrested; and punitive police is threatened; and a number of new police stations opened resulting

in additional police terrorism. The Committee appeals to the Congress Government in Madras to immediately put a stop to this policy, to radically amend the Malabar Tenancy Act and otherwise give immediate relief to the oppressed Kisans, on the line suggested by the All Malabar Peasant's Union.

Victory at Rajkot

This Committee welcomes the victory of the people of Rajkot in their struggle after great suffering and fortitude and expresses profound relief at the successful termination of Gandhiji's fast.

Kisan March to Tripuri

The All India Kisan Committee greets the Kisan Marchers of Mahakoshal who will arrive at Tripuri on foot on 9 March to submit their grievances before the Congress President and Congressmen and wholeheartedly supports their demands for abolition of the Malguzari System, declaration of a Moratorium pending cancellation of all agricultural debts, 50% reduction of Land Revenue. Canal Rates and other Taxes total abolition of all grazing fees, drastic revision of the Annawari System, remission of the Land Revenue in affected areas and such other local demands for giving immediate relief to the peasantry.

Indian States

The Committee extends fraternal greetings to the thousands of kisans, mazdoors, youths, students and other men and women who have suffered and are suffering assaults, tortures, arrests and imprisonments in their fight for establishment of Civil Liberties, agrarian reforms and responsible government in Tikamgarh, Limbdi, Bikaner, Benares, Nilgiris, Orcha, Samthar, Rajanandgaon, Dhenkenal, Ranpur, Talcher, Rajkot, Junagadh, Radhanpur, Hyderabad, Kashmir, Patiala, Chukhadan, Todi Fatehpur, Jaipur and other small and big States of India and pays its respectful homage to those who have laid down their lives in the sacred cause of the liberation of 80 millions in the renewed agitation and struggle in many other States.

The Committee, while assuring all people of the States of the whole-hearted solidarity of the Kisans of India in their historic struggles requests Praja Mandals, State Congress, and similar organisations to draft and popularise, without any more delay, their own Charters of Kisans Rights with a view to mobilize the organised strength of their peasantry in aid of their struggles against the terrorism of their feudal masters. The Committee is convinced that the States organisations should call for a total and unconditional elimination of the legal and illegal powers of Talukdars, Bhyats, Carasias, Thakores, and other Zamindars, who, today aid the States in oppressing their peasants and seek to buttress the tottering thrones of the Princes and Princelings. The Committee is convinced that it is only by organising the day to day resistance of the down-trodden Kisans against their immediate oppressors and by inaugurating a States-wide United Campaign to withhold all rents and taxes from the States as well as their vassals that they will herald an agrarian revolution and secure a true Swaraj or Praja-Rajya in the States.

The Committee also urges the Kisan Sabhas of neighbouring Provinces to fraternise with and render all possible help to the States Kisans in their unequal struggle against the medieval zolium of their oppressors. The Committee trusts that the Kisans of the Provinces will fraternise with their comrades of the States by holding joint meetings, demonstrations and sending volunteers to aid their normal and special struggles.

Finally the Committee desires to warn all States workers and leaders against any hasty inauguration of big struggles followed by hasty attempts of compromises, as these are likely to stabilize the shaky system of State Governments. For, the Committee is convinced that while

progressively devastating blows should be dealt to these systems of archaic rule, no compromises of a far reaching nature should be made with their Princes, who can only act as pawns of the Paramount Power. The Committee hopes that the united struggles of peasants and peoples of the States and Provinces will be continued till the whole Feudal system represented by the Princes and their allies will be completely liquidated and assimilated in one political system as a preliminary to the achievement of Complete Independence in India.

This Committee is aghast at the growing number of reports of violent attacks upon and raping of women, desecration of the privacy of homes of Kisans, looting of villages and countenancing and even conducting daylight dacoities and raids in villages and towns and cruel ill-treatment and violence upon men, women and children in all these States and is convinced that there can be no safety of person, sacredness of home and security of property and occupation as long as the States' administrations are not brought under the complete control of the masses.

This Committee is convinced there is even much greater need to appoint impartial inquiry by Judicial Tribunals of outstanding ability and eminence than in Rajkot States, to enquire into all the horrible and indescribably heinous repression and oppression perpetrated against their poverty-ridden and much exploited people who are denied every kind of civil liberty by the Princes and their hirelings in these and other States.

Damodar Canal

This Committee congratulates the Kisans of Damodar Canal Area in Burdwan district (Bengal) on the courage and heroism with which, undaunted by police and military terror, they are prosecuting their campaign against the executive canal tax imposed on them. The Committee calls upon the Kisans of neighbouring districts to accord them every help possible and hopes that the struggle will soon be crowned with success.

Campaign in Berar, CP & Maharashtra

The Committee accords its hearty support to the struggle inaugurated by the Kisans and Kisan Sabhas of Berar, and CP (Marathi) and some districts of Maharashtra to secure complete remission of land revenue and rent in areas suffering from all round failure of crops and trusts that they will take concerted measures to appoint village committees for effectively banning all attachment and auction proceedings and take all other necessary and legitimate measures in order to compel the Government to give them adequate relief.

34. (a) Kisans Stage Demonstration at Lahore

Tribune, 24 March 1939

Lahore, 23rd March: About 2,000 Kisans belonging to the Lahore district staged a demonstration today at Lahore. The Kisan Committee of the Lahore district organised the demonstration and according to the decision arrived at previously the Kisans who carried red flags and shouted Kisans slogans started in a procession towards the Punjab Assembly Chamber where they wanted to hold a demonstration to draw the attention of the Government to the grievances of the Kisans with regard to the new *bandobast*.

Before starting, the demonstrators held a meeting in the Mori Gate gardens. Comrade Mangal Das presided

A number of Kisan and Socialist workers addressed the meeting. They appealed to the demonstrators to remain peaceful under all circumstances and refrain from using any undignified word or any slogan against the Ministers personally.

The procession started under the leadership of Comrade Yog Raj.

As the processionists came out of the gardens and were about to cross the Circular Road in front of the SPSK Hall the City Kotwal informed Comrade Yog Raj That the government would be prepared to receive their representatives numbering 8 but they could not proceed further. The leader wanted a written order.

Sardar Gandarhab Singh, Magistrate First Class, then showed the orders of the District Magistrate prohibiting the demonstration under Section 144 and banning the entry of any Kisan procession for one month from Circular Road, Bahawalpur Road, Jail Road, Canal Road, Mayo Road and Brandreth Road.

The organizers after consultation agreed to send their representatives and their names were given to the Sahibzada Sardar Abdus Samad, City Magistrate.

A hitch arose over the names when the City Magistrate after consultation with other officers informed the leader that only agriculturists and those only belonging to Lahore district could go in the deputation. Master Gajjan Singh, though an agriculturist belongs to Ludhiana and Comrade Ram Chandra is not an agriculturist. The leader insisted upon having the same names and said they, were all members of the Kisan Committee and hence could represent them. The City Magistrate then went to consult the higher authorities.

The negotiations between the Kisan leaders and the local authorities who were acting on behalf of the Premier however failed.

Section 144 Defied

Comrade Yog Raj declared that in spite of their best efforts the authorities had suggested unacceptable terms. It had been therefore, decided to defy the ban under Section 144.

The situation soon grew piquant and both the police and the Kisans strengthened their sides. Mr F.C. Bourne, District Magistrate and Mr D. Grainsford SSP, also arrived at the spot.

The Kisans started their morcha and they began coming forward in batches of 5 each to defy the ban. The first batch of Kisans was headed by Comrade Yog Raj.

Batches began coming forward and they were taken into custody by the police.

The police under a DSP made a cane charge on the crowd to clear them away.

Dr Gopi Chand, Leader of the Opposition, accompanied by S. Sampuran Singh, Mian Iftikhar-ud-Din, Ch. Mohd. Hasan, S. Sohan Singh Josh, Master Kabul Singh, S. Hari Singh, S. Harjap Singh, (MLAs), came at the spot and after holding consultations with the Kisan leaders all of them went back to the Assembly to speak to the Premier. Dr Satya Pal and S. Kishen Singh also came later.

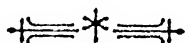
Comrade Ram Chandra and three others were picked up and taken into custody although none of them was defying the ban.

While this struggle was going on here, Comrade Yog Raj and his companions reached the Assembly Chamber and raised slogans of 'Inqlab Zindabad' Ch. Ram Singh, DSP arrested all the 5 and then took into custody another batch of 21 Kisans and two others who came to make the demonstration.

The struggle was at its height when hailstorm and rain came and the crowds dispersed. But police and the Kisans kept standing facing each other.

The leaders then announced that they were withdrawing their morcha till tomorrow.

Those arrested were removed to various police lock-ups. In all about 105 arrests have been made. The police withdrew at about 7 p.m.



(b) Kisan Agitation in Lahore, Montgomery and Multan

Fortnightly Reports, First and Second Halves of April, 1939, Home Political File No. 18/4/39, NAI

During the fortnight small batches of demonstrators gathered in Lahore daily to defy the order of the District Magistrate under section 144, Criminal Procedure Code, forbidding demonstrations within a certain area surrounding the Assembly Chamber. The sentences imposed on offenders during the first few days were so lenient that others were encouraged to come forward in the hope that they would be released in time to get home for the harvest. A gradual increase in the severity of the sentences has proved a deterrent and now that harvest time has come, the organizers have experienced considerable difficulty in securing recruits. Many of the demonstrators do not come from the Lahore district at all and a large proportion are not peasants. Most of the members of the Opposition in the Assembly were satisfied by Government's claim that the recent settlement of the Lahore district caused no real grievance. While these members undoubtedly intend to pursue their policy of embarrassing Government in every possible way, they find it difficult to support openly the unlawful efforts of the Lahore District *Kisan* Committee. The Premier has also explained clearly to a representative deputation of the demonstrators the result of the settlement and the working of the sliding scale system. He has also promised to investigate any grievances that come to notice when the new orders are enforced. The demonstrators have not, however, been able to make up their minds about what course to pursue beyond determining to carry on with defiance of the District Magistrate's order.

The Sikh *Akali* Party has been taking a close interest in the peasants' demonstration. Most of the demonstrators have been Sikhs and the party fears that it may lose prestige if it does not lend a hand in the agitation. In the hope of taking over charge of the agitation the *Akalis* offered to produce at least 500 persons to court arrest, but the Lahore District *Kisan* Committee resents the interference of other bodies because it too does not wish to lose the doubtful prestige that attaches to leadership in such demonstrations. A few of the leaders of the *Kisan 'Fauj'*, recently organised by the *Akali* Party, sought and were granted an interview by the Premier who explained the details of the Lahore settlement scheme to them. It is now doubtful what the *Kisan Fauj* will do.

There is still a certain amount of unrest among tenants in the Montgomery and Multan districts. At Burewala, one of the centres of agitation in Multan, there was a *Kisan* conference during the fortnight. District officers, however, are taking a firm line in dealing with imported agitators.

The agitation in Lahore continues, but the organisers have shifted their ground. The Premier received two deputations, one representing the local *Kisan* Committee, which included a communist whom the Premier originally felt that he should not see, and the other representing the new *Akali Fauj*. To both he explained the implications of the settlement of the Lahore district, and how the sliding scale of assessment operated. The intransigence of both organizations was revealed by their subsequent actions. The *kisans* decided to continue the civil disobedience until their demands were met. Originally they merely wanted to demonstrate before the Assembly Chamber; now they insist that action on the new settlement should be postponed for three years during which time Government should negotiate with the *kisans* to produce a result more acceptable to the agitators and their dupes. The *Akali Fauj*, which had only wished to make certain representations to Government and were given an opportunity to do so, immediately afterwards decided to take part in the agitation. Altogether twenty-four *Akalis* were arrested, but recently no *Akali* recruits have come forward and it is not clear what action the *Akali Fauj* now proposes to take. Towards the end of the month the *Kisan* committee experienced difficulty in getting volunteers and they

had to fall back on the expedient of sending women to court arrest. Altogether 1,001 persons were arrested up to the end of April.

Agrarian agitation in the Multan district came to a head on 12th April when the Colonization Officer sought the help of the Police in ejecting the old tenants from certain lands recently released to a new grantee in Chak No. 451. One of the tenants happened to be the secretary of the local Kisan Committee and he and 16 others had to be arrested under section 107/151, CPC, for obstruction. The next day 100 tenants who entered the land and began to plough it, had to be declared an unlawful assembly and dispersed. Eighteen of the ringleaders were arrested and prosecuted. Subsequently parties of five came daily to court arrest and imprisonment. The organizers, however, found considerable difficulty in getting volunteers and from the 24th April no attempt was made to commit criminal trespass. Peripatetic agitators from outside have also been dealt with under the security sections. The firm action taken by local officers and the acknowledged weakness of the case of these agitators should soon cause the collapse of this defiance of the law. Already the organizers are quarrelling among themselves and are being pressed by the dependents of those who have gone to jail to secure the release of all prisoners through the abandonment of Civil Disobedience. It is significant that Congress leaders of standing, including a few members of the Legislative Assembly, have avoided having anything to do with this ill-advised agitation.

3.5. The Fourth Kisan Sabha Conference (Gaya)

Statement of Achyuta Nand Prasad, Publicity Officer-in-Charge, 4th Session of the All-India Kisan Sabha, *Bombay Chronicle*, 24 March 1939

Statement of Achyuta Nand Prasad, Publicity Officer-in-charge, All-India Kisan Sabha, 4th Session writes:

Crushed under the wheels of the mediaeval feudal economy and its pro, the British Imperialism, the Kisans whether in zamindari or Ryotwari areas present a very tragic picture today. The feudal economy has been pressing their very blood out of them and depressing the productivity of the land they till. The usurer have been sucking their dry bones still drier.

British Imperialism in its turn has been mercilessly grinding them for it is principally their surplus labour which is being appropriated by the British monopoly capital in one shape or the other. Their bodies uncovered but for a piece of tattered loin cloth, their sunken cheeks, lusterless eyes and hungry looks are enough to tell us the history of their woes. Yet these Kisans form 90 per cent of the Indian population, only 10 per cent being dependent on industries. An agrarian movement alone can help us in sweeping away feudalism and imperialism, and in building up a new social order based on planned economy. And for agrarian revolution the main plank in our national democratic revolution independent organisations of the Kisans as a decisive fighting force is the prime condition.

Accordingly the Kisans have forged their Kisan Sabha which has now passed the agitational stage and under the guidance of revolutionaries like Swami Sahajanand Saraswati has fast been growing into a highly centralized co-ordinated body. This organisation of theirs is not to outrival Congress but to strengthen it and to make it a real powerful fighting organ of the masses against Imperialism. This year on 9th and 10th April the All-India Kisan Sabha holds its 4th Session at Gaya, one of the nerve-centres of the Kisan Movement.

All the important leaders hundreds of delegates and lacs of Kisans are expected to attend it. A very large-scale plan has been mapped out. Regular office with 21 various departments have been opened. For spectacular effects an exhibition with various sections, e.g., agricultural section, flower-

show, dairy section, plant nursery section, industrial section, etc., have been planned. Elaborate arrangements for instructive lantern lectures and amusements, are under discussion. Thus the session is designed to be a very big affair and to make it successful a very large sum is needed. Accordingly the Reception Committee expects all progressive elements and anti-imperialists to raise subscriptions and to send their own quota for the purpose of the Session. Hearty co-operation of persons or institutions having exhibited to show, too, is being eagerly looked forward to. Hence the appeal.

36. Kalipatnam Peasants' Struggle

Kalipatnam Peasants' Struggle by Vasudeva Rao [Pamphlet], Andhra Congress Socialist Party, Bombay, 1939

We bring to the notice of all the AICC members and the general public, the case of Kalipatnam peasants who were subjected to a severe lathi charge recently. About seventy people were arrested including 28 women. The women prisoners were beaten and ill-treated in jail, just as in the old-pre-Congress ministry days. But we have been told here that orders have been passed by the Congress ministry for their release and they have since been released.

But the Andhra Provincial Congress Working Committee in its meeting of 26th March passed a resolution prohibiting any Congress worker from participating in such struggles and asking for explanation from those who had participated in it.

We appeal to all the AICC, members to see that such police atrocities are not repeated again under the Congress ministry of Madras. We further appeal to all the AICC members to prevent the Anthra Provincial Congress Working Committee from pursuing its present policy of conflict with peasant associations, which if followed, we fear would lead to retardation of the national struggle.

S. Satyanarayana Murthy
P. Sundarayya

Kalipatnam is a village of Narsapur Taluk in the West Godavary District. It consists of about 7,500 acres of land, of which about 3,500 acres of land is covered by forest; the rest of 4,000 acres is old waste and sandy tract, surrounded by salt creek. During rainy season and every new-moon and full-moon, seawater covers the whole area (the sea is only two miles from the village). All the villagers numbering about 3,500 resort to this waste land during such times, and catch fish. Each person has got an exclusive right of fishing in a particular patch area. This is the chief means of livelihood for all the villagers from times immemorial.

This village is an Agraharam granted long ago by the zamindar of Mogalturru for the support of a choultry and as such, it is a charitable endowment. The trustee is Sree Kandregula Sreenivasa Jagannadha Rao of Rajahmundry, the trust property amounting to nearly 900 acres of land in Kalipatnam village. So he has got a little only to the 900 acres and the rest of the land (covered by salt creeks, porambokes, old waste in which the residents have been enjoining customary rights) belongs to the government.

Trustee, the zamindar of Kalipatnam, in his anxiety to appropriate the whole land of the village, induced the villagers of Kalipatnam in the year 1925, to make petitions to the government for grant of water supply for cultivation. The agreement entered into by the trustee and the ryots was that the latter should cultivate the land and give up their flashing rights in the village waste and also to clear up the village forest. They should be granted pattas for the lands in their possession

and that each ryot should pay a stipulated sum of money to the zamindar as rent in return for this service of his.

So the villagers of Kalipatnam put in petitions to the government for irrigation facilities. They were granted for the project an area of 4,000 acres. The zamindars got the forest area cleared by the ryots according to the terms of agreement.

Now, that the water has been granted to the project area, the zamindars of Kalipatnam began selling that land to the neighbouring villagers as though it were his own. As a justification of disposing of the lands, this zamindar came forward with the argument that he spent Rs 1,40,000 for the construction of the project, and to realize that sum he has adopted this course. It is to be noted here that the zamindar had already realized more than what he spent by selling away the forest, worth about Rs 60,000, and about Rs 2,00,000 by selling away 2,000 acres of the dispensable land. Besides, he is getting Rs 12,000 by way of rents on these lands, while he is paying a nominal sum of Rs 50 towards *peshkash*. The ryots protested in vain. The zamindar filed a petition before the police to the effect that the villagers were forcibly cultivating his lands. The police started proceedings under Section 144 and 107 against 37 persons. Orders were issued under Section 144 prohibiting the villagers from entering the land on which they were fishing. After the termination of the period, namely 2 months, the zamindar successfully prevailed upon the villagers prohibiting them from entering the area until the civil suit (which was instituted against some of them) was settled. The villagers were thus today deprived completely of their only source of livelihood. Yet they remained very peaceful and law-abiding, inspite of provocation.

Section 144 has been renewed on the ryots against entering the lands, and the zamindar began to allot the land to the former purchasers, this ejecting the ryots from the lands. For this the police help was resorted to and consequently a batch of 80 reserve police was encamped. The peasants became restive and determined to resist the action of the zamindar by offering peaceful satyagraha. While the responsible ministers were in Tripuri the police thought it proper time for them to place themselves at the helm of affairs and crush the peasantry. So they took the law into their hands. Summons were issued to Com. Alluri Satyanarayana, J. Ramalingayya (Executive Members of the provincial CSP) and K. Bangarraja, Secretary of Taluk Ryots' Association, under Section 107. The vociferous attitude of the police department in no way differs from that as in the days of civil disobedience.

The ryots, to save their means of existence were forced to offer satyagraha and that too in a most peaceful manner.

The zamindari men with the help of the police began on 8th March allotting the lands to the purchasers. So on 8th March more than 1,000 ryots, men and women, young and old, stepped into the field with tri-colour flag and offered satyagraha in most peaceful manner. The police over anxiously waiting for an opportunity to interfere, resorted to brutal repression. Severe lathi charges were made. Several persons were wounded. An old peasant was severely beaten. Even pregnant women were not spared. The District Socialist Party and Peasants' Association have been leading the Satyagraha. On 9th the peasant women have took up the challenge and 400 women headed by Com. Alluri Annapurnamma, District Board Congress Member, and U. Marikayamba, both members of Socialist Party offered satyagraha, and 50 of them including the leading lady comrades were arrested. All but these two leaders of satyagraha were sentenced to six months R.I. after a mockery trial, which lasted for only 30 minutes.

The tri-coloured flag was forcibly seized by the police and trampled under foot. The President of the District Ryots' Association who came there to enquire into the matter was also arrested and the total number of arrests mounted to about 100.

The President of the Provincial Ryots' Association who was ailing from the last fifteen days ran to the scene on 10th March. He immediately wired therefore situation to the premier. Telegrams were received from the Premier asking to suspend satyagraha. On 11th March the peasants who had been carrying satyagraha till then obeyed the premier and suspended satyagraha, but the police were not withdrawn from the scene. The demarcating of land was stopped. Mr T. Prakasam ran from Tripuri to the spot and has personally enquired everything. So far the Provincial Congress authorities have not intervened in the matter though satyagraha was stopped under their instructions.

The police have not yet learned their lesson. They have recently served notices under Section 107 CrPC on six Congress workers in that district.

The peasants demand that the following demands of theirs be fulfilled:

1. Release of all arrested and convicted persons.
2. Withdrawal of all cases still pending.
3. Immediate actions against the police who are responsible for inhuman atrocities.
4. Immediate withdrawal of Sec. 144 against the ryots.
5. Restoration of the dispossessed and waste lands formerly held by the ryots.

37. Congress and the Kisan

Statement of the President of the Andhra Pradesh Kisan Sabha and Secretary of the Andhra Pradesh Congress Socialist Party on the resolution of the Working Committee of the Andhra Pradesh Congress Committee on Kalipatnam Satyagraha, Bezawada, 1939

Governorpet
29 March 1939

To every freedom-loving person in Andhra, the recent resolution of the Working Committee of the Andhra PCC on Kalipatnam Satyagraha would be a shock. It raises certain very important issues that everybody loving the congress and participating in the national struggle have to consider seriously. Before we go up to these fundamentals, let us examine the judgment passed on Kalipatnam affair by the Working Committee.

It calls the Satyagraha 'ill-advised and hasty'. It was nine months back that the District Ryot's Association and the District Congress Socialist Party took up the cause of the peasantry. The Narasapur and Bhimavaram Taluk Congress Committees lent their active sympathy to the cause of the peasants. They petitioned to the government, approached the District Congress Committee and the Provincial Congress Committee to take up the just grievances of the peasantry and get them back the 800 acres of land which the zamindar promised in lieu of the villagers surrendering their fishing rights and which promise he now refuses to redeem.¹

On twelve of the villagers the police proceeded under Sec. 107. We fought out the case in the courts. Sec. 144 was served prohibiting the inhabitants from going into the fields. The villagers through sheer physical necessity, have to go out to the fields for their normal daily life. Police at that time, for some reason or other, have not interfered. Law and order was not broken. Everything was going on peacefully.

Instead of interfering in the affairs on behalf of the peasants or considering all relevant facts impartially, Dr Pattabhi sent reports to Gandhiji that Andhra Socialists were out to spoil primary property. Gandhiji too denounced it. In the AICC meeting Dr Pattabhi accused the Socialists of inciting the poor peasant folk to violence. We challenged him then, and even now challenge him to prove it. Neither the DCC nor the PCC have taken any further interest in the case. Encouraged by Gandhiji's statement and Dr Pattabhi's attitude, the zamindar became more unyielding. The

police too started a new offensive. The 12 peasants who were being prosecuted under Sec. 107 were convicted. Sec. 144 was issued once again. The zamindar proceeded to measure the land and sell it. The peasants have no other way except to resort to peaceful satyagraha to protect their rights. After nine months of petitioning, representations and the failure of the PCC and the DCC and the Congress Ministry to redress their grievance, if the peasants resort to a form of action for impressing on the public and the Ministry their grim resolve to suffer for their rights, the Andhra Congress leaders think it 'ill-advised and hasty.' But the DCC because of this struggle has taken up the cause of the peasants.

The satyagraha was stopped on receiving the telegram from the Andhra Working Committee from Tripuri and on an assurance that it would take up the question. But till now Dr Pattabhi has not even gone to Kalipatnam lest it should lend support to the peasants. He seems to have told him that he considered the Kalipatnam peasants' struggle as nothing but a violation of the sanctity of private property and that if the Kalipatnam peasants won, it would mean that private property hereafter would have no security. And on such a President's advice such a resolution is passed by the Andhra Working Committee! In the whole of the resolution not a word about the just claims of the peasants, but only threats of disciplinary actions!

The worst parts of the resolution are the following two:

1. It warns against any such unauthorized campaigns of satyagraha without the previous permission, advice or consultation of the PCC.
2. It requests the Secretary to obtain explanations from responsible Congressmen in the matter of their participation.

These two raise grave questions before every Congressman. These same questions were raised earlier in Bihar. The BPCC wanted to prohibit Congress members from working in Kisan organisations. There was a conflict between the two organizations and as a result of this the Haripura Congress recognized the right of Kisans of forming separate organization, and thus put an end to this controversy. Separate organisations mean freedom of action when such action becomes necessary.

We would like to inform the Andhra Working Committee, as responsible members of the AICC, one of us as the president of the Andhra Provincial Peasants' Association and other as the General Secretary of the Provincial Congress Socialist Party, that the attitude of a large number of Congressmen including Socialists on this burning problem is as follows:

They will try to move the Congress Committee and the Congress Ministers to redress the just grievances of the peasantry. If the Congress Committee or Ministers do not move in the matter, they will support the Kisan organisations and the Kisans in their struggles through thick and thin. They firmly believe that only by supporting their struggles for redressing their just grievances they can be won over to the National Congress and to participate in the struggle for National Independence. We do consult and take the advice of the PCC, but we do not bind ourselves to seek the permission of the PCC to start any satyagraha. But of course no satyagraha would be launched on behalf of any Congress organisation without the PCC's previous permission. We will (exercise our) right of initiating struggles either as individuals or as members of Kisan and labour organisations, and we firmly believe that such initiation is in the interests of the national struggle itself and will strengthen the Congress organisation itself.

If the Congress Committees are not controlled by money bags and landlords—unfortunately there are very many like that even today—there will never be any conflict between the Congress on the one hand, labour and Kisan organisations on the other. When there is conflict, it weakens all the organisations concerned. We want to prevent this and that is why we want Congress Committees to come forward to support the struggles of the peasants and labourers. But we are

not prepared and will not be prepared to give up the cause of the struggling Kisans and labourers even under threats of disciplinary action by the Congress authorities. For, we strongly believe that giving up the Kisan and labour struggles is not going to merely weaken the Congress but it will do away with the Congress as a fighting organ of the Indian people for national liberation. Because we love the Congress, because we value the struggle for freedom more than anything else, we will not allow even some Congress Committees to give up these struggles or even to take up a neutral attitude.

Perhaps the Andhra Working Committee thinks that such an attitude is contrary to Congress, and that is a fit case for disciplinary action, and may wield it. We appeal to all Congressmen throughout the country and especially in Andhra to create a situation that will make it impossible for Andhra Working Committee to follow its present policy of disruption.

K. Satyanarayana Murthy
President

Andhra Provincial Peasants Association

P. Sundarayya
Secretary,
Andhra Congress Socialist Party

¹ This we mentioned here only to bring out the following point: The peasants during the negotiations for a settlement, were even ready to accept the 800 acres. But when the zamindar refused to accede to this moderate request of theirs the struggle has been started. Now the demand of the peasants is that the whole land which previously belonging to them should be returned. This is already stated in Com. Vasu's article.

II. SECOND QUARTER OF 1939

38. 'Kisan Movement—Reviews and Tasks'

An Article by P.C. Joshi, *National Front*, 2 April 1939

The elected representatives of about 8 lac organised Kisans meet at Gaya. The All India Kisan Sabha has become the second biggest mass organisation in our country after the National Congress. Its responsibilities are great, its decisions would affect not only the Kisans but the whole of the people's movement of which it is an integral part and from which it has itself arisen.

The last world crisis knocked the bottom out of our already exhausted agrarian economy. For generations the rack-rented debt-enslaved Kisan had no reserves, he had just carried on his miserable existence from year to year producing whatever surplus he could for the Government, the landlord and the money-lender. Face to face with the effects of the crisis he was utterly helpless to meet his revenue rent or debt charges. But the crisis alone could not produce the movement. The Kisan had known nation-wide famines in the last century, nation-wide crises after the war but no nation-wide Kisan movement had emerged. There was helpless submission to fate or heroically fought local agrarian riots, but after the war a broad *national* movement arose with vague aims but which the Kisan thought would change his conditions of life too. The Kisan before he knew any class politics was drawn into the national struggle. It was his experience of the last two Civil Disobedience movements, his disillusionment with the policy of national reformism, that created the subjective basis for the rise of the Kisan movement, *the Kisan himself began to feel the need of a Kisan movement*. The necessary positive factor was supplied by the impact of the working-class movement. The Indian worker has his people staying in the village which he yearly visits. The visiting peasant to

the town saw the Red Flag and witnessed strike struggles. Slowly but surely the message of the Red Flag went from the toiler in the town to his brother in the village: class—the bond of unity, demands to remove grievances, organisation to overcome helplessness, struggle for victory.

The Kisan movement began from below in Behar and UP the two provinces where the Kisan has been drawn most into the national struggle led by the Congress. From above, came the initiative of the Socialists and the Communists to launch a co-ordinated and centralized nation-wide Kisan movement when the first All India Kisan Conference met at Lucknow. In provinces like Bengal and Punjab where the Congress had been hostile to Kisan interests a Kisan movement was also taking shape extremely critical of the Congress and under the inspiration of the Communists. This section too readily joined up. Lucknow was the session of the unity of all Kisan workers and their determination to have an all-India organisation of Kisans.

The period from Lucknow (March 1936) to Faizpur (December 1936) was a period of the co-ordination of the existing provincial Kisan contacts and organisations and pooling together of newer contacts. *The Charter of Minimum Demands* of the Kisans had been formulated in the meanwhile and it became the basis of widespread agitation to set up local Kisan Sabhas and was finally confirmed at Faizpur, where the fundamental line of the AIKS being *an independent class organisation* was laid down and the call was given to start local Kisan Sabhas as constituent units of the AIKS.

After Faizpur the Kisan movement rapidly began coming of age. It declared its political solidarity with the National Congress and for common anti-imperialist aims. It threw in all its forces and sacrificed its sectional gains to see the Congress victorious at the polls. The popularisation of the Congress Election Manifesto and the agrarian demands of the Faizpur Congress by the Congress and Kisan workers not only stirred the whole peasant mass and brought it to line up behind the Congress but also created the basis for mass Kisan Sabhas which began arising everywhere.

When the AIKS met in its annual session at Comilla (38th May) its membership was about 5 lacs, it had already become an independent class movement, which had to define *its fundamental aims* and it did so by declaring unequivocally for the *agrarian revolution as a part of the national revolution*. The Kisan movement had become a mass movement and was passing over from the agitational to the organisational stage.

The period from Comilla to Gaya has been one of organisation and struggle. Struggles which appeared local before now became phenomenal. Kisan Sabhas which seemed ephemeral proved impregnable. The Kisan Sabhas brought into the sphere of organisation and struggle and of national politics millions of Kisans who had not been touched by the appeal of the National Congress nor covered by its organisation. The Kisan movement directly influenced and encouraged the States people's struggles, a whole new sector of our broad national movement.

The Kisans have forged new weapons, effectively used older ones, and reshaped new ones to suit their own purposes.

The March has been a specific Kisan contribution to our national armoury. It has been used with remarkable success to achieve different ends. It has been initiated by the most militant locality in a district to gather the rest of their brethren and approach the District Magistrate with their common grievances—may be remission, extortion or the demand for *taccavi* and to bring the local officials face to face with their united strength. It has taken the form of a cross-country march initiated from the Provincial Kisan headquarters as in Behar, Andhra, Maharashtra to forge the sanctions behind their demands before the Congress Ministries and mobilize the Kisan behind his organisation and get him into it too. It has been used for fraternisation with and paying homage to the Congress. A Kisan March has been organised to every session of the Congress. By now almost every province has had its Kisan March which has put the Kisan Sabha on its political map.

In the actual struggles against rack-renting, ejectments, sowcars frauds, forced labour and other feudal grievances the technique used by the Congress during Satyagraha days has been employed and further enriched by assimilating the experiences of the strike struggles of the industrial workers. The old collective traditions of the village have been used to advance the cause of struggle, e.g. collective sowing and harvesting in the bakasht struggle in Behar, a man per homestead delegated for the struggle in Mandvi and so on.

These partial struggles have by now been fought in every province, they herald a new chapter in the life of the Indian Kisan—no more a victim of fate but a maker of history. Not only the lone Kisan but his whole family, women and children have undergone the baptism of struggle. There have been whole villages that have participated to a man in these struggles not one black sheep was there. Prison, lathi, bayonet, bullets, arson, rape and attachment of house-hold goods all have been tried to break the Kisan struggles but in vain. The movement has already become sanctified with the blood of unknown martyrs, and the deeds of nameless heroes headed by one of the greatest sons of the soil, Swami Sahajanand.

These partial struggles have enriched our revolutionary movement and strengthened its core. They have made the Kisans crack battalions of our National Army.

After the acceptance of Ministries by the Congress an offence against the Kisan Sabha movement was launched by the Right Wing on the ground that the Kisan Marches were unnecessary and demonstrations against the Ministries and Kisan Sabhas rivals to the Congress. These arguments were not only palpably wrong but served as a smoke screen to be able to follow a constitutional policy, to which the rising Kisan movement was proving the greatest hindrance. The upsurge of the Kisans meant extra-parliamentary pressure from a sector where the real mass basis of the Congress lay and it was irresistible by arguments for it demanded nothing more than the rapid implementing of the promises made to the Kisan in the Election Manifesto. It had therefore to be damned as anti-Congress! A poisonous propaganda was set afoot against the Kisan Sabha in every locality by the supporters of the Right. A split in the national forces seemed imminent. The battle raged for months. The Haripura resolution, restating that Kisans could form their Sabha and Congressmen help it if it did not carry out an anti-Congress policy, settled the issue as a *national* controversy, a nation-wide frontal offensive against the Kisan Sabha was given up, but pin-pricks in the localities have continued and also desperate efforts to isolate the Kisan Sabha from the local Congress. Can we call this a victory? *Prevention of disruption is a negative gain only, it is the building up of unity that is a positive achievement. The Kisan movement so far has failed to achieve active unity with the Congress.* It defeated the direct offensive against its very existence by showing that it could not be carried through without splitting the Congress itself, for the Kisan workers of today were none else than the Congress workers of yesterday the members of the Sabha were the most ardent supporters of the Congress itself, and the Kisan movement had already become a mass movement.

But Right disruption could be successfully scotched only by forging Congress and Kisan Sabha unity on the political and organisational planes, by convincing every genuine Congressman that the Kisan Sabha movement brought added strength to the Congress and every Kisan that unity with the Congress helped him to win his own demands and play an effective role in the national movement.

How could this be done?

(1) Immediately after the formation of Ministries the Kisan Sabha should have taken the initiative to propose carefully worked out legislative proposals concretising the Faizpur demands, get support for them from within the Congress Committee and swing the Kisan masses behind these draft Bills and not waited for the Ministers to draft Bills with the help of Civilian Secretaries and on the

consideration of what will be acceptable to the Zamindars as well. The Kisan movement mostly put up sloganised demands alone, not concrete proposals and since the actual proposals emanated from the Government Secretariats it had to ask for more concessions for it itself and less for the Zamindars etc. The Ministries could always argue that this was impatience, unreason, etc., and get the Congress organisation to support them by just demanding loyalty. Political initiative and constructive thinking was called for and not mere agitation and it is here that we failed.

(2) Again, in the conduct of partial struggles it was necessary in every case to consciously work to get the active cooperation of the local Congress Committee and thus transform every Kisan struggle into a people's struggle and thus build from below national unity.

It is true that our failure has not been wholesale, there have been notable and several exceptions but the actual and untiring implementing of the policy of national unity had to be the rule of the whole Kisan movement. Judged by this high standard we have failed and it is a political failure. For this the primary responsibility is of the Socialist and Communist leaderships that should have supplied a concrete political line and constructive proposals.

Line of Isolation

The offensive from the Right coupled with political and objective inability to defeat it by successfully implementing the policy of unity has led to the emergence of a sectarian trend within the movement. It finds expression in the following three slogans:

- (1) Let us strengthen our Sabha now and later when we are stronger, it will be time to have united front with the Congress.
- (2) We want unity but the Congress does not. Let the Congress come to us, we are willing. In the meanwhile, we carry on with our Kisan work.
- (3) There can be no unity between the exploiters and the exploited. National Front is a chimera, toilers front alone is the real anti-imperialist front.

These appear to be different but they are variants of one common line. They conceive of the Kisan as unrelated to the rest of the people. By idealizing the Kisan, they isolate him from real life and the society in which he lives. These slogans appear Left but in reality they make the Kisan politically ineffective and confine his actual movement within the economic sphere alone. The major class division is between Imperialism on the one hand and the Indian people on the other, the greatest class struggle to day is our national struggle, the main organ of our struggle is the National Congress. Any course that takes the Kisan away from this straight course separates him from the people, takes him away from the anti-imperialist struggle that is actually raging, divides and weakens the whole national movement. Such is not the line of unity but of disruption of economism and not anti-imperialism.

Gaya must see the *shradh* of this isolationist and disruptive line. It is not yet of importance within the Kisan movement and is certainly not the policy of the whole movement but is a danger to the growth of the movement, which must grow in unity with the Congress and to advance the struggle of our nation against Imperialism. The Gaya session must reiterate unflinching solidarity with the Congress and for the anti-war and anti-Federation struggle that will become practical political issues during the year. But declarations alone, however sincere, are not enough. Gaya must give also clear directives to implement this policy. *General political agitation is no longer enough, practical steps are needed to build the actual unity of the local Congress Committee and the Kisan Sabha.*

It is this Congress-Kisan unity which will move the Congress itself forward. Unity will not force the Kisan movement to a lower stage but take the whole national movement to a higher stage. The Kisans cannot wait for a brotherly hand to be extended to them in these critical times,

it may be too late. They are a revolutionary class and as such the initiative must come from them. They have not only to strengthen their own class movement but also build the unity of the nation. Their own task is not only one but both, not only to be good Kisan workers but also good Congress workers. Thus alone they will play a real part in the political life of their country and also help themselves.

Organisational Leadership

During the last year, when the movement assumed the character of a mass movement, all its problems become organisational and ceased being agitational. But lack of organisational leadership has been another failure of the movement. The movement has grown much faster than the leadership has been able to cope with and thus the movement has tended to be rudderless, spontaneous and elemental and the growth of the movement has not been truly reflected in the rising strength of the Kisan Sabhas. It is not that the Kisan leaders have not known what to do but the crux of the problem is that there has been too little of what was demanded by the needs of the movement.

The Provincial and All India Headquarters do not function as the General Staff of a million strong mass organisation which moves millions and has yet to organise millions more. This is borne out by the uneven growth of membership. A few provinces contribute almost the entire membership, most struggling behind with a couple of thousands alone.

Local struggles break out, local comrades sink their all in them and screech in vain for help from above. Some individual leading comrades may go to their rescue or they may not. There is no cadre of senior experienced comrades who would act as organisers and inspectors on behalf of the All-India or provincial organisation and concentrate the resources of the whole movement on the fighting front where the fortunes of the whole movement may be at stake.

Newer Kisan comrades are hardly given any training. They educate themselves as best as they can, learn whatever they can from their own immediate experience. Living and working as they do, they naturally lack ideological-political maturity and serve as an excellent base for sectarianism. This is a grave danger. There have been Schools but they have hardly touched the fringe of the problem. We need Schools and more Schools, for the workers of different grades, organised by the District Sabhas for the rank and file, by the Provincial Committees for the local organizers and by the AIKC for the provincial leaders.

The movement has acquired a status and faces problems that need a Department to carry on serious *economic and political investigations and research work*. As yet the excellent Bulletin devotedly edited by Comrade Yajnik is the only activity in this direction besides the various memorandums by the Provincial Sabhas drawn up at the eleventh hour, on the proposals that have been on the legislative anvil. Collection of a Fund earmarked for this purpose and delegation of a team of intellectuals exclusively for this purpose is an urgent necessity if the movement is not to be called upon to follow its historic course almost blind.

Once again the prime responsibility for the organisational shortcomings falls upon the Socialist and Communist leaderships who have failed to strain their utmost to supply the remedies, give necessary relative importance to different tasks and fulfill first tasks first. According to any standards that can be applied to them as Marxists, they too have worked almost blindly in the movement.

At Gaya

The Kisan movement can consolidate its present strength and march to greater strength only to the extent the Gaya session helps to evolve a practical political line for the movement, simple slogans are no more enough, and to the extent it tackles the major organisational issues facing it and which its own growth has created, mere agitators methods won't help the movement any

more. Unity of the Kisan front has been its pride, Gaya must preserve, broaden strengthen it. This must be the keynote of all organisational decisions. The unity and strength of organised Kisans must be used to cement and strengthen the unity of the whole Indian people. This must be the basis of all political decisions.

It is thus that the Indian kisan will realise his own destiny—a true son of the soil. Subservient to none, brother of all, front-trench fighter for freedom!

39. Welcome to Gaya

Sahajanand Saraswati's address at Gaya, *Congress Socialist*, 2 April 1939

2 April 1939

On behalf of the All India Kisan Sabha I most cordially invite the All India Trade Union Congress, the Provincial Trade Union and other labour unions to send in their representatives to attend the fourth session of the All India Kisan Sabha to be held on the 9th and 10th April at Gaya. I also invite the All India Congress Socialist Party and its provincial branches to kindly send their representatives. I would further invite prominent communist leaders engaged in labour or other political activities to attend the session.

I need not emphasise the point that the solidarity among Kisans and labourers is the *sine qua non* for the achievement of the objective which the Kisans and labourers are striving for and the communists and socialists are aiming at. It is gratifying to note in this connection that the relation between the Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha and the Socialist Party has been one of unique co-operation and marvelous joint action. The united front between these two organisations has been so thorough and complete that a section of the intelligentsia has come to identify, though wrongly, one organisation with the other. Besides this, the Kisans and labourers have firmly stood by one another during recent months when labour strikes and Kisan satyagrahas have been launched at various places in Bihar. To take lessons from all this, as well as to have first hand knowledge of the ways in which the Kisan movement, particularly the campaign of Bakasht Satyagraha, is being conducted in the Province of Bihar, I would request representatives of labour unions and the socialist party as well as communist leaders to make it a point to attend the Gaya session in large numbers as our fraternal delegates.

I further feel happy in inviting the All India Students' Federations, its provincial branches, various youth organisations and Naujawan Sabhas,¹ to fraternize with the Kisans of India in general and of Bihar in particular in the hour of their trial and tribulation by sending their representatives. In fact, the youth and students of Russia, China, Egypt and other countries have made the Kisans of those countries what they are today; and it is with this belief of rendering timely help and guidance to the rising tide of Kisans awakening the consciousness throughout India that I am extending this humble invitation. At this critical juncture of the Kisans the indomitable courage of and the desperate push by the youth and students is most essential. The presence in itself of their representatives in our minds will greatly strengthen the cause of the Kisans and make them resolute in their fight.

¹ Naujawan Bharat Sabha: Bhagat Singh and his comrades had formed in March 1926 in Lahore, the Naujawan Bharat Sabha—a militant youth organization which was to propagate socialistic ideas, preach the necessity of direct action against British rule and serve as a recruiting center for Revolutionary Terrorism. In fact the sabha was organized by the collective efforts of Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev, Bhagwati Charan Vohra and Comrade Ram Kisan. The aims and objectives of the Naujawan Bharat Sabha were:

(a) to establish a free republic of workers and peasants in India;

(b) to inspire young men with the spirit of patriotism and sacrifice so as to make India a full-fledged national entity;
 (c) to cut off all connection with those bodies which propagate communalism or favour communal representation;
 (d) to relegate religion to its proper position as a matter of personal belief, to generate a spirit of toleration among the masses and to act up to it oneself;

(e) to take an interest in every such anti-communal, economic, social or political movement which brings near the ultimate goal of establishing a free republic of workers and peasants in India; and for this goal,

(f) to organize the workers and youth movements.

The promulgation of the Indian Press Ordinance and the declaring of the Naujawan Bharat Sabha and allied bodies as unlawful in 1930 resulted in the gradual recession of the Sabha's activities.

40. 2,000 Peasants March to Town

Leader, 3 April 1939

Barisal

30 March 1939

What is regarded as a symptom of an acute economic distress in north Bakerganj was witnessed here when over 2,000 peasants led by the Krishak Samiti reached the town shouting the usual slogans. They laid their grievances before the collector in front of the municipal office. Their demands include the immediate distribution of agricultural loans under the direct supervision of the collector and rest relief works for landless peasants. After negotiations between the representatives of the peasants and the collector the latter agreed to the demands and assured them that he would tour the affected areas from Sunday and distributed two annas per head for immediate expenses. He also asked the Krishak Samiti to supply him with a list of the peasants needing loans.

41. Bihar Zamindari Estates

Leader, 3 April 1939

Patna

29 March 1939

It is understood that the Bihar Government propose to introduce two official resolutions in both Houses of legislature to discuss the question of acquisition by the Government of the zamindari estates throughout the province. The resolutions are understood to be of a non-committal character, the object of which will be to sound public opinion on the subject, after which, if the opinion is found to be largely favouring the taking of steps by the government for the acquisition of the zamindari estates, the Government might consider the feasibility of introducing legislation on those lines.

42. Ranga's message to Gujarat Kisan Conference

Bombay Chronicle, 5 April 1939. For report of the Conference, see *Bombay Chronicle* on the same date and 7 April 1939

Prof. N.G. Ranga General Secretary, AIKS, sent the following message to the First Gujarat Kisan Conference:

I am extremely glad to learn that the Gujarat Kisans are having their First Provincial Kisan Conference, I wish it every success.

The Gujarat Kisans have won a great reputation for themselves, all over India owing to their dauntless fight and great sacrifices during the last two satyagraha campaigns. But unfortunately

they have not provided themselves with a permanent network of Kisan Sabha to find for them which every Kisan needs throughout the year.

That it is not enough for our Kisans to leave their fate completely in the hands of the Congress, especially when there is a Congress Ministry is demonstrated by the failure of the Congress Ministry, to replace the present land revenue system by income-tax on agricultural incomes above a minimum exemption limit; to cancel agrarian indebtedness, and to establish minimum prices for agricultural produce and minimum wages for labour. Neither are the Halia freed from their serfdom nor are our Kisans freed from the clutches of the money-lenders.

In support of our Kisan Sabha I need only mention to my Gujarat Kisans the declaration of moratorium for some section of Bombay Kisans by the Congress Ministry. Only a few days after our Kisan March at Bombay in January 1938 to demand moratorium even in the face of the declared opposition to it of the Finance Minister Mr Latthe and the mouth-piece of big business Mr Manu Subedar.

The All India Kisan Movement is making giant strides. It stands for the undiluted interests of our Kisans as well as the nation and it is only by standing by it that our Kisans can guarantee the achievement not only of political freedom but also their economic independence.

If we wish to continue to check the growth of influence of Bombay, Ahmedabad and Sholapur capitalists and safeguard our interests within the Congress, Kisan Sabha is our only sheet-anchor. Therefore I appeal to Gujarat Kisans to strengthen their Kisan Sabhas.

43. Agrarian Situation in Bihar

Hallet to Linlithgow, 7 April 1939, Hallet Papers, Acc. No. 3948, NAI

10. Agrarian Matters

... The most serious features in the agrarian situation is the increase in the number of disputes over *bakasht* lands. This evil started in Gaya and Monghyr, but is now spreading to Northern Bihar. In many cases the claims put forward by the *raiya*s are probably ill-founded, but I have also little doubt that in many cases landlords in order to avoid the accrual of occupancy rights have failed to grant rent receipts or to create any documentary evidence of possession. Local officers seem to be dealing with these cases in a sensible manner by holding local enquiries in the villages.

11. To meet this difficulty a draft Bill has been prepared and we considered it at our last Council meeting: I did not like it, it had been prepared in Secretariat and no local officers had been consulted, even though many of them must have acquired in recent months great experience of these disputes. Briefly they will provide an alternative procedure to that prescribed by section 140 CrPC; instead of the Magistrate deciding the question of actual possession, it was to be decided by a so-called jury consisting of one member nominated by each party and a third member appointed by Government, if a party failed to nominate a member, Government had the right to make the appointment. It seemed to me that Bill was open to the following objections: (a) it may be held to be repugnant to section 145 CrPC and therefore to attract section 107 of the Government of India Act, (b) the procedure would be even more dilatory and slow than that under section 145 CrPC, (c) the decision would in effect rest with the third member of the jury appointed by Government; and it was very doubtful whether it would be accepted by the parties as I quoted to my Ministers, even Rajendra Prasad's award in Barahiya Tal dispute had not been accepted, (d) there was no right of appeal on reference and for this reason the High Court might hold it to be *ultra vires*.

12. I do not think that the Bill has been put forward with any desire to belittle the position of a Magistrate; and indeed I fully sympathise with its objects. But in a matter of this kind one wants

the help of experienced officers and I am glad to say that the council agreed to consult selected District Officers and also the High Court. I have unfortunately no very definite idea as to what can be done, but I hope this consultation will help us.

13. Another point discussed at the same council meeting was the question of action against agrarian agitation. Local Officers are naturally reluctant to take action against the 'small fry' when Swami Sahajananda and other leaders go free. The Ministers and in particular the Finance Minister, were very anxious for action to be taken against the 'small fry'. The matter was left over for further discussion which cannot take place till after the Easter Holidays. Of course the real difficulty is that till the question of the constitution of the Working Committee is decided, and whether it will be left or right, they do not know how they stand. I hoped Tripuri would settle this problem, but it appears to be dragging on and no doubt the DIB. keeps your Excellency informed of the position. The most recent letter I have seen is one which the Mahatma advises the President to form his own Committee and see whether the AICC will accept his views and programme. It is a most unsatisfactory position.

14. The other agrarian problem is of course the question of the realization of rents; landlords complain that they are realizing practically nothing and do not hope to realise much as long as the rent reduction operations are going on. Whether this complaint is wholly correct is a bit doubtful; when in the United Provinces, I was always getting similar complaints, but the fairly successful collections of land revenue seemed to me to show that these complaints were not well founded. Unfortunately we had no time at our last Council meeting to discuss the position, and it must wait till next week. Thanks to the sunset law; we may collect our land revenue, but I am afraid collections of case will be very low and that will put District Boards in a very difficult financial position. I am watching the situation and collecting as accurate statistics as possible of collections. Meanwhile the only action the Prime Minister has taken is to see whether it is possible to expedite the rent reduction operations. I hope shortly to visit a rent reduction camp and see for myself what is being done.

15. A further problem is that of the acquisition by government of Zamindari estates. Private Bill was introduced to enable proprietors to apply to Government for the acquisition of their estates; the Board of Revenue, adopting possibly rather a cynical attitude, were not against it, as far as I recollect, but the Finance Department rightly commented that at the present times when rents reduction operations were in progress and when the agricultural income tax has been imposed, it would be extremely difficult to fix a fair price. The Bill or the idea underlying it has a large amount of support; it was for example advocated at a meeting of the Bihar Chamber of Commerce which I attended. But the problem has not been really worked out. It is one of the questions put to the Land Revenue Committee in Bengal and their proposals might help us. I am therefore following the policy of playing for time and the Ministers have agreed—they may of course change their minds—to move a non-committal resolution in the Legislature, probably in both Houses, that the question should be examined. This may help us and after that I hope we might get a decent committee appointed to work out details. We are having too much hasty legislation and we don't want any more on a major issue of this kind...

44. Sahajanand's call to Gujarat Kisans

Bombay Chronicle, 7 April 1939

Swami Sahajanand Saraswati, President, AIKS and Pandit Jadunandan Sharma, President, Gaya Kisan Sabha, sent the following messages to the Gujarat Kisan Conference.

Our warmest greetings to the Gujarat Kisans—Halis, Dublas, Raniparaj Bhils, Patils, Kshatriyas mis-called Baraiyas and Dharalas and others—and their leaders assembled for the first time in a Provincial Kisan Conference.

It gladdens our heart to read and learn the news of an all-round fight going on in Gujarat under the banner of the Provincial Kisan Sabha and the able leadership of the Com. Indulal Yajnik and his brave and indomitable companions and colleagues. Docile and dumb Dublas Raniparaj are raising their heads in revolt against the age-old slavery and the resultant miseries and tyrannies heaped upon them by Sahukar-Zamindars.

Humble and meek Kisans are no longer in a mood to submit in a lamb-like way to the tortures and insults inflicted on them so far by the Jagirdars, Inamdars and Thakores. Submissive people of the State and agencies of Gujarat and Kathiawad are now vying with each other in a peaceful revolt against feudalism and autocracy of the Princes and Rulers.

There are thus ferments everywhere and it is in the midst of these that they are meeting in that Conference under the guidance of that veteran leader and recognized servant of the down-trodden, Dr Sumant Mehta. We are convinced that they will chalk out a plan of action with a view to create an immediate sanction for their demands. This is the most opportune lead that the Conference can give to the Kisans of Gujarat and Kathiawad.

We are definitely of the opinion that if the Kisans and the masses are to come to their exploitation is to cease for ever. Unthinking trustfulness and blind following on their part must come to an abrupt end and in all the religious, social, economic and political spheres. Every activity and decision of the leaders and organizations claiming to serve them, must be judged mercilessly, on a clear-out criterion of the class interests of the Kisans, Mazdoors and the lower middle classes and must be accepted or rejected accordingly.

There can be nothing like one and the same Swaraj for both the exploiters and exploited and all vague talks of such a nonsense must stop. A swaraj alike for a lamb and a lion is simply unimaginable. This simple and bare truth should be brought home to all assembled there, and they ought to determine on an uncompromising but peaceful battle against their oppressors before they disperse and every measure and precaution should be taken to make them thoroughly class-conscious without which their deliverance is simply unthinkable. Let the Kisan organisation be a living thing and the rest will follow quickly, we are sure.

45. Women Throng Kisan Conference

Bombay Chronicle, 7 April 1939

Dr Sumant Mehta¹ who presided over the First Gujarat Kisan Conference on April 1-2, had issued the following statement giving his impressions of the two days' proceedings of the Conference:

The First Gujarat Kisan Conference was unique in several ways. The Reception Committee consisted of people who themselves had built up the gate, the mandap, the committee hall and the residential huts for the guests.

The President and the workers from all over Gujarat and Bombay were seated just outside the Mandap under a Mango grove. If there was a gust of wind a few unripe mangoes would fall either on the head or shoulders, and these hard mangoes falling down a distance of 20 feet hurt like stone.

Nearly 40 per cent of the audience consisted of women who were addressed by Sharadaben Mehta and Gangaben Jhaveri. The women listened to the proceedings with great attention and when they were asked to take part in the voting they did so with real enthusiasm.

On the second day the audience was more than ten thousand. People of course got out for a smoke and came back so it was difficult to count, but we did make an attempt to count. In the usual Congress of the Intelligentsia, you always find that the audience dwindles down on the second day and gets decimated on the 3rd day. Here it was the other way about. On the first day I believe there were more than five thousand persons.

The Mandap was built on the bank of the river Coma. The natural scenery was very picturesque, because we were on the outskirts of a forest.

Some people had come walking very long distances to hear the message of deliverance, and they got the message in very simple direct language. People from among the Kisans got up and spoke. There were one or two people whom I could not follow thoroughly because of their dialect and intonation, but the audience eagerly swallowed every word.

The resolutions were all business-like. Of course they wanted much relief, more than they were likely to get for years, but their demands were just.

Comrade Indulal Yajnik and his band of enthusiastic workers, none of whom cares about publicity, deserve our grateful thanks for the great work that they have done during the last two years, against heavy odds.

¹ Dr Sumant Mehta (1877-1968); born at Surat where his father was a personal physician of the Maharaja of Baroda; after completing primary and secondary education at Baroda and Bombay, he joined the Medical College at Bombay for three years, later received M.B.Ch.B. degrees from the Victoria University in Manchester in 1901. On the death of his father, he took up his post with the Maharaja. In 1898, got married to Sarada Ben. His interest in the national movement began with the 1906 Calcutta Session of Indian National Congress and by 1915, he joined with his wife in the Servants of India Society. He opted out of his service to the Maharaja in 1921 and began his life in social service. During this decade, he participated in various agrarian struggles including Bardoli Satyagraha. In his efforts to mobilize youth and women, he organized *Yuvak Sangh* and *Stri Swaraj Sangh*. A staunch believer of Secularism, Swadeshi, Non-violence, he even harboured radical tendencies and met revolutionaries like Madam Cama, Birendranath Chattopadhyaya and Syamji Krishna Varma during his European sojourn; at a great personal risk he brought the proscribed work of Savarkar, *The Indian War of Independence* in the royal baggage to India. His reminiscences of an eventful career can be found in his *Samaj Darpan* published in 1964.

46. All-India Kisan Conference (Subjects Committee) Meeting

Searchlight, 9 April 1939

Gaya

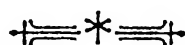
9 April 1939

... The Subject Committee of the All-India Kisan Conference met this afternoon at leaders' camp and is continuing it at the time of writing. Important political issues are being discussed and I understand resolutions that may eventually emerge may give a political lead to whole of India. Congress Kisan Sabha relation is naturally engaging pointed attention of leaders. While a section of them are more eager to emphasise class character of Kisan organisation and intend to develop it as parallel and rival to Congress, consensus of opinion, is in favour of relation of activities of the Kisan Sabha with the activities of the Congress. Majority of the opinion appeared to me to be favouring the co-ordination of Congress Kisan and labour movements into one mighty anti-imperialist movement and direct it to the immediate and of attainment of independence. I understand majority of leaders assembled here consider the present situation as most favourable for launching offensive against British Imperialism. They count upon the growing strength of labour and kisan movements in the country as well as phenomenal awakening amongst the States' people. They also take into consideration the increasing complexities of international situation

and urge that India instead of waiting for Federation being thrust upon her by Britishers should herself take the offensive at this psychological moment. It appears, the political resolution of the conference will eventually be drafted on such lines. It will emphasise the unity of all Radical anti-imperialist forces in the country and will interpret the Tripuri Congress resolution as a call to action in near future. But while unity with the Congress may be emphasized in the main political resolution I understand that Congress action, specially, the action of the Congress Governments may come in for severe condemnation. In one or more resolutions some of the Kisan leaders appear to be very bitter against the Congress Governments. They consider the relief hitherto given to peasants as hopelessly inadequate and the attitude of Congress Governments to Kisan struggle over issues like *Bakasht* lands positively retrograde and reactionary. It appears, on this subject the Conference will adopt strongly worded resolution extremely critical if not condemnatory of Congress Governments. It further appears that apart from *Bakasht* problem which will be dealt within a resolution reviewing the achievements of Congress Governments no other problem of Bihar may figure in any prominence in deliberations of the Conference.

The issue of District Board election in Bihar is no doubt uppermost in minds of all Bihar delegates from talks. I gather, most of them strongly disapprove of the Working Committee selection of Congress candidates. This issue appears to have been discussed last night meeting of Provincial Kisan Council at which some speakers even suggested open and formal revolt against Congress but it is not likely to come before All-India Conference, being a purely local issue. Even in Provincial Kisan Sabha circle the more prominent leaders are not in favour of attaching any special importance to this issue. At any rate indications so far available do not foreshadow an open revolt of Kisan Sabha against the Congress over the issue of District Board Election. A meeting of the All India Kisan Sabha was held last night to transact formal business. Prof. Ranga, Secretary, presented his annual report and accounts. A sub-committee was appointed to scrutinize the report which will be formally adopted today. It is understood, the report reviews the birth and growth of the Kisan Sabha and the phenomenal awakening it has brought about among the Kisans. It presents a bird's eye view of the Kisan movements in provinces and naturally devotes large space to Kisan movement in Bihar with special reference to *Bakasht* Satyagraha at Reora, Barahiya Tal and other places, it deplores constitutionalism and atmosphere of growing content with opportunities for constructive works provided and legislative and administrative pre-occupations created by the acceptance of ministry by the Congress. It points out that we are far from achieving our full freedom and attaining our goal of complete independence. There is no doubt whatsoever that the main body of Congressmen are setting themselves down to a fairly long period of quiet and normal life, trying to forget early prospects of realization of the goal.

The only relieving feature in this prolonged period of constitutionalism it goes on 'were the activities of the-Kisan cum-Mazdoor Sabha'. It condemns the move of certain Congress leaders to crush the Kisan movement with special reference to the Champaran District Congress Committee's resolution and the Bihar Provincial Working Committee's resolution on the Kisan Sabha and ends with an appeal for the intensification of the struggle.



47. Settlement between Congress and Zamindars not difficult, opines Raja of Darbhanga

Maharajadhiraja of Darbhanga's presidential speech at the All India Landholders Conference, Lucknow, *Bombay Chronicle*, 10 April 1939

Lucknow
8 April 1939

The belief that, so long as a group following the directions of Gandhiji, rules in the Congress and the Socialists and the Communists are kept in check, the Land-holders and Zamindars would not have to adopt any extreme step, was expressed by Maharajadhiraja of Darbhanga,¹ while presiding over the All-India Land-holders' Conference which, commenced here this afternoon, in the historic Baradari Hall.

His Highness said: 'We maintain that we have as much right to exist as any other class that is in existence today, by reason of the long process of evolution. We have met here to demonstrate that we are not going to recede from the field of action. We are alive to the new situation, and we are prepared to play our part honourably and well.'

He said that he felt that an honourable compromise was not difficult between the Congress and the Zamindars. He added: 'For a minority interest like ours, it is only desperation that can drive us to fight, and I have reasons to believe that so long as a group following the directions of Gandhiji rules in the Congress, and the Socialists and the Communists are kept in check we shall not take that extreme step.'

He strongly pleaded for a federation of All-India Landholders and a representation-orientation of their policy and programme.

The Nawab of Chattari, ex-Governor of the Province, welcoming the delegates, stressed the role of the Zamindars in the country, and hoped that an All-India Organisation would give them a correct lead.

Prominent among those present, were the Raja of Kollengode, Raja of Mymensingh, Raja of Tirwa, Mr Tulsi Chandra Goswami, MLA(Bengal), and Raja of Jahangirabad.

The Subjects Committee is meeting tonight, and the open session tomorrow at ten.

¹ Col. Hon'ble Maharajadhiraja of Darbhanga, Kameshwar Singh Bahadur, (Son of Maharaja Sir Rameshwar Singh Bahadur, born in 1907; KCIE, LLD, D Litt, Member of the Council of State, 1933-46; Member of the Constituent Assembly, 1947-50, Member of the Provisional Parliament, 1950-51; Rajya Sabha, 1952-58 and 1960-62; died in November 1962.

48. Role of the Kisan Sabha

Jadunandan Sharma's address to the All India Kisan Conference, *Bombay Chronicle*, 10 April 1939

Gaya
9 April 1939

Mr Jadunandan Sharma, Chairman of the Reception Committee of the Gaya session of the Kisan Sabha dealt with the grievances and demands of the Bihar peasantry. Explaining the relations between the Indian National Congress and the Kisans and commended the various pieces of legislation that the Congress ministries had passed or undertaken to the attention of Kisan workers.

Rebutting the charges of violence often made against the Kisan organisations, Mr Sharma said that it had become a fashion to talk of non-violence, in season and out of season. Especially when those who used violence at every step and whose very existence rested on violence simply because comic and excited derision when they came forward as apostles of non-violence. All Zamindari and capitalism rested on violence and yet these interests were not ashamed to lecture to the Kisans about non-violence. He made it clear that they had adopted peace and non-violence as a matter of policy and not a creed and yet they would be as faithful to the policy as if it was their creed.

Explaining the task before the Kisan organisations, Mr Sharma said that those who thought of the Kisan Sabhas in terms of their being just branches of the Congress or attempted to make it such, simply deluded themselves. The Kisan Sabha was an independent political class organisation and demand it, its duty to fully democratize the Congress and protect from the influence of the vested interests.

To the Kisans, whose land is being snatched away, whose crop is being ruined, who is groaning under the pressure of debts and black deeds of Sahukars and co-operative societies, whose starving naked families are verging on death for want of medicine and finally, whose poor cottages are all without roofs, this empty talk of Swaraj and freedom is as inept as that of paradise and salvation, and simply adds insult to the injury. Therefore, we stress the importance of their agrarian struggle at the outset demanding inter alia restoration of land to them, cancellation of debts and arrears of rents, substantial reduction in rents, rates of interests and water rates, immediate provision for food, clothing and medicine and putting an end to various forms of tortures and tyrannies. To us this appears to be the only way to prepare fully the Kisans and other exploited masses for the impending struggle for liberation.

49. Ministers must not resent criticism: Narendra Dev's complaint

Narendra Dev's presidential speech at the All-India Kisan Sabha Conference, *Bombay Chronicle*, 10 April 1939

Gaya
9 April 1939

'Let us sink our differences and work for unity in the Congress without which the prospect of immediate struggle will recede in the background. Let us all unite in one big effort to translate our resolution into action. The peasant masses are deeply interested in the decision of the Congress at Tripuri calling upon all parts of the Congress organisation, Congress Governments and the people generally to prepare the country for a nationwide struggle. Let them set themselves to this task and create those conditions which will enable the Congress to fulfil its resolve.' Thus observed Acharya Narendra Deo, presiding over the All-India Kisan Conference, held here today.

Proceeding Acharya Narendra Deo said:

'There has been a powerful invigoration of the struggle for national liberation during the last two years. There is a new awakening among the people of Indian States. The masses are becoming more and more class conscious and their organized strength is developing rapidly. Both the workers and the peasants are everywhere conducting partial struggles for the realization of their immediate demands. The organized tyranny and repression of the vested interests is being met by stout resistance from peasants and workers. Common understanding and fraternization between peasants and workers is developing. The national struggle is becoming more and more identified with the struggle of oppressed classes.

'There has been a remarkable growth in the prestige and influence of the Congress in recent years. Its interest in world politics, its opposition to imperialism and fascism, its support of the cause of freedom and democracy, all combine to bring the Indian people in line with those peoples of all lands, who by their co-operative efforts and struggles are striving to usher in a new era of peace democracy and social justice. The noble stand of the Congress for high principles and its setting its face against political opportunism has immensely raised the moral stature of India and has contributed to the growth of its political influence abroad. Though India is still in a state of bondage, and is not a free state, yet many foreign nations have already begun to look upon it as having attained the age of majority. It is in the fitness of things, therefore, that the Congress has declared that it is urgently necessary for India to direct her own foreign policy as an independent nation.'

'The Kisan movement as organized on an all-India basis is of recent date and for that reason it has not been properly developed in all the provinces. The organizational problems are to be carefully attended to. There is phenomenal awakening in the country-side and we can reap a nice harvest if only we know how to make the best use of our opportunities. The workers should receive political education and the programme and the policy of the Sabha should be explained to them in detail. The relationship that should subsist between the Kisan Sabha and the Congress should be well impressed upon their minds. The necessity and significance of the peasant movement, the role of the peasantry in the anti-imperialist struggle and the role of the Congress should be things on which the workers should be enlightened.'

'The object of the Kisan movement is to secure complete freedom from economic exploitation and achievement of full economic and political power for the peasants and workers and all other exploited classes. Its basic economic demands of abolition of the Zamindars system without payments of compensation to the owner, of cancellation of debts and substantial reduction of rent and revenues cannot be satisfied without enlargement of political freedom and the objective cannot be achieved without the establishment of an independent democratic state by means of constituent Assembly.'

Explaining the relationship between the Congress Ministries and the Kisan movement, Acharya Narendra Deo observed that it was patent to everybody that the Congress Government were labouring under many hardships and that they were not in a position to initiate any revolutionary measures. But it was certainly expected of them that they would exhaust all the possibilities of the new constitution in order to bring the greatest measure of relief to the masses. Many ministers even looked upon the Kisan movement with suspicion. It was also distressing to find that criticism from even Congressmen was not relished. Government which is responsible to the people should instead of resenting criticism, invite it. It should not wait for taking action till a demand becomes insistent and specific action is threatened to enforce demands. He fervently desired that Congress ministries should be enshrined in the hearts of the people.

50. Split among Zamindars

Bombay Chronicle, 13 April 1939

Patna
12 April 1939

A clear split in Zamindar ranks in Bihar has occurred since the Congress Zamindar Agreement. Petty Zamindars and Zamindars of South Bihar have been at war with the Zamindars of North. They allege that the North Bihar Zamindars have betrayed them at the altar of their own interest. They have, it is understood, repudiated Darbhanga's and Dumraon's claim to speak on their behalf.

The basic cause of the difference is that the rent reductions agreed to by the Congress Zamindar Agreement has told more heavily on the petty Zamindars and Zamindars of the South than on those of North Bihar. Hence any agreement between Rajendra Babu and Darbhanga is not likely to be accepted by them. Nor is there any likelihood of the Kisans accepting the Agreement. The Kisans are in war mood after the Gaya Conference.

The Rajendra-Darbhanga talks thus face a formidable hurdle. Six thousand petty zamindars will not follow Darbhanga. The Kisans will not submit unless the issue over the 'Bakasht' land is settled in their favour and their debt is washed off and rents reduced by fifty per cent. Yesterday night's Darbhanga-Rajendra talks covered a long range such as the working of the Congress-Zamindar Agreement, (land struggle and the proposed Bill of the Bihar Ministry for acquisition of Zamindars). The questions of rent realization and unrest in the rural areas were also discussed.

The declaration of the Finance Minister in the Assembly sometime back that by its various agrarian measures the Bihar Ministry was making a beginning towards the ending of Zamindari system, while it has won back the Kisan confidence in the Congress, is causing anxiety in Zamindar circles.

51. Kisan movement in Bihar

Fortnightly Report for the period ending 22 March 1939, File No. 1, NAI, Bihar State Archives

Gaya
14 April 1939

In spite of a period which includes communal tension and incidents the agrarian situation is still by far the most important feature during the period. There has been held the All India Kisan Conference on which I am submitting a separate report, Cases of delayed *batai* are still being reported and zamindars are in many cases refusing to take their shares as they intend to go to the civil court with the allegations that the crops have been wilfully damaged or have suffered from theft. Many of these cases originate from disputes about *bakasht* land and all we can do is to have the crop divided after inspection by a responsible officer and to tell the parties that they can apply for a certified copy of that officer's report. This will at least prevent the civil courts from blindly accepting the zamindars' contention in subsequent rent suits. During the last month Swami Sahajanand during his tours has collected a number of cases which he has sent to me and in which I have ordered enquiries by Revenue officers. Many of the cases reported to Swami Sahajanand are not genuine cases of delayed *batai*. There is usually a serious dispute between the parties the merits of which the Swami takes no trouble to ascertain. Swami Sahajanand will now be told that he can direct the complaints to the Revenue Courts for redress.

I do not think this difficulty about delayed *batai* will be reduced until it is decided to make extensive use of clause (e) of section 112A to settle fair rents. I am moving the Commissioner separately on this subject. I anticipate there will be a heavy rush of applications for commutation of *bhauili* holdings during the next 8 months and there will be attempts at every harvest to manipulate the outturn; *batai* will be delayed; crops will be damaged; portions of the crop will be stolen; *amins* will be bribed to put forward *khesras* showing output contrary to facts and in this manipulation and trickery the tenants will display as much ingenuity as the landlords. The only difference will be that kisan leaders will exploit the delay and intensify agitation whilst the zamindars will go to the civil courts and intensify the bitterness between the parties. If it is known that the *bhauili* holdings will be commuted on the basis of rents settled under clause (e) that will reduce this manipulation

and will relieve the police and the Revenue Officers of a large amount of extremely irksome and profitless work. If tenants and zamindars know that section 69 proceedings will not be taken into account for commutation, there will be much less delayed *batai* next season.

Another major problem is the irrigation and I hope that the new act will give the local officers powers to take on new schemes and to repair old schemes with greater speed and efficiency than the present Act. One unnecessary handicap in this district is the absence of a technical staff. I have to use temporary, ill-trained Overseers for framing estimates for repairs of old pynes and also for opinions about new pynes. Occasionally, I make use of the District Engineer for advising on more difficult new schemes but it is a job for an Agricultural Engineer working with his own staff. I do not require expensive experts from the Irrigation Department to deal with projects costing up to Rs 10,000. I require a cheap staff under the control of somebody with expert knowledge not only of irrigation but also of agriculture. An irrigation 'drive' in this district would do more than any other single step to convince zamindars and tenants that amelioration of their conditions was the direct concern of Government. If new schemes and old schemes could be financed on easy terms, the agrarian situation would be greatly eased.

The institution of appeals under Section 112A in my Court has become an embarrassment. I have disposed of over 100 of these appeals during the last two months but there is far more important work to be done and were I to 24 hours a day, I cannot keep pace with the present rate of institution of these appeals. There are also more than 1,000 commutation cases pending and within the next 6 months this number is likely to be doubled. No collector can do his job if he alone is saddled with this headquarters work.

I have moved Government separately for vesting many of my officers with powers under section 58. This would be helpful when the officers are deputed to deal with cases of delayed *batai*. In 3 cases out of 4 failure to grant receipts is at the bottom of *batai* troubles and as the proceedings of Section 58 are summary, offenders could be dealt with on the spot. Officers should be vested with these powers.

52. Peasant Awakening in Kerala

'Peasant Awakening in Kerala' by A.F. Gopalan,¹ *Bombay Chronicle*, 15 April 1939

One often hears now-a-days of the discontent among the Kerala peasantry and their struggle for economic redress, but few outside that province have perhaps any but a vague conception of the condition making for them. Where once the tenants used to submit themselves meekly to the conditions bordering on serfdom, or to burst forth into sporadic upheavals only to be stifled into mute acquiescence, they are today organized in strong units and are led consciously by a band of active Congress workers. Outside attention has again come to be focused on their struggle in recent times probably because of the arrests and convictions taking place every now and then of the Kerala Kisan workers—under the eyes of the Madras Congress Ministry.

In North Malabar the peasant lives under conditions unimaginable in a civilized country. Apart from the already exorbitant rent, he is compelled to pay a number of illegal levies which, sometimes, exceed the rent itself. He is to make payment whenever it is the landlord's whim to celebrate a festival. It would not be wrong to say that for the landlord it is a continuous round of merry-making at the expense of the actual tiller of the soil.

Then there is a class of peasants who are not the owners of the soil they cultivate, but get a share in the produce only at the will and pleasure of the landlord. These peasants settle on the hilly tracts which are under the possession-right of landlords and bring up cultivation and live peacefully there for a number of years. Then, one fine morning, the landlord comes and asks him

to vacate, with no compensation, because the land 'belongs' to him. Thus it was that most of the forest areas in North Malabar were brought under cultivation. At times, the peasant grows seasonal vegetables, but he has no right to touch anything for his own use.

Another illegal exaction is that the landlord owns a measure of his own in which he takes in the rent and quite another to give corn out. The unlettered peasant is sometimes made to pay in this way one hundred and fifty measures for every one hundred measures:

In the whole of Malabar, when a peasant intends to celebrate a marriage, he has to carry presents to the landlord and get his permission for the marriage to be conducted.

The following is the translation of a letter sent by landlords: 'We have decided to give the usual annual treatment (toning up) to our elephant, for which you should bring 50 seers of rice, 2 seers of oil, 20 coconuts, 2 bottles of arrack etc.' This circular may sound curious to people in cities, but it is but one of many such sent every year by landlords to their tenants. Now, non-compliance with the order would mean ejectment, fine or even corporal punishment: This landlord, one of the richest landlords, keeps a 'Kathakali' troupe of his own, for the maintenance of which each of his tenants has to pay fifty rupees every year.

The position of women under the system of exploitation as exists in Malabar is most unenviable. Our peasant Union is in possession of a statement by the niece of one Ambu Komaram, a tenant in which she discloses the incident of an alleged rape committed on her by the landlord's assistant. She was suffering from sore-eyes, when the assistant came and asked for her company. The family people asked only for a procrastination, due to the women's eye trouble. This was all they dared to: But even to this he would not assent. She was raped with the result that she lost her eye-sight.

This was the state of misery and oppression when the tenants of North Malabar began to be organized to agitate for better conditions. Taluka and Village Unions were built up. This was no haphazard work, but patient activity, controlled and non-violent. The organized activities of the peasants brought some fruit and hope dawned in the minds of the people. In many cases, however, the landlords were unyielding.

As the peasant unions began to gain strength, the landlords held secret conferences among themselves, and in league with the police, began to spread the bogey of violence by peasants and Kisan workers. A circular was sent round to village authorities to note down the names of Kisan workers. Conditions were termed 'abnormal'. The circular said that punitive police would be introduced to meet the 'abnormal' situation. All this happened in the three Talukas of Kasargode, Chirskkai and Kottayam. Two new police stations were opened, one at Irikkur and another at Peringome.

It might interest the readers to know that while in Bombay on my way back from the Tripuri Congress, I was surprised to read that a summons has been issued against me, under Sections 117 and 186 IPC for a speech delivered by me in a Peasants' Conference held in January 12 this year at Eramam, forty-five miles from Cannanore. The warrant has been issued by Mr G.L. Wood, ICS, Joint Magistrate, Tellicherry, at the instance of the Peringome police authorities' reports. It is to be noted that the police station at Peringome is one of those newly opened to meet the 'abnormal situation'—which often ends up in the arrests and convictions of well-known Congress workers. More than three hundred peasant workers, most of them secretaries and other office-bearers of Congress Committees, are now under arrest. These arrests have become common occurrences in Kerala.

False alarms were raised by the landlords and the police that the Kisan movement was assuming uncontrollable dimensions and that there were preparations going on for a no-tax and a no-rent campaign. To investigate these reports, the Hon'ble Mr T. Prakasam, Revenue Minister of Madras, made an extensive tour of Malabar. In a statement which he later issued the Minister said that

these allegations were baseless. He admitted that there was no no-rent or no-tax campaign or preparation for it.

But there has been no end to repression. Curious charges are brought against one after the other of the peasant union workers. The Kerala Provincial Congress Committee has requested the Madras Ministry to conduct a non-official enquiry into the various factors culminating in the present situation in Malabar. Conferences have been held in various centers and resolutions demanding an enquiry have been passed.

The fact that Congress Socialists have a dominant voice in the Kerala Provincial Congress Committee is being used to ignore the complaints or even to repress the workers. All this in a Province where none of the unhappy conflicts between the Congress and the workers or the Congress and the peasants or between the different sections of the Congress itself, are in evidence. Those from outside who have traveled in Kerala bear witness to the fact that province is one of the strongest links in our anti-imperialist sector. The Congress has been strengthened in our Province greatly. Membership has increased many times. Congress, Socialist, Kisan and trade union work is conducted in perfect harmony. The coming of the Congress Ministry in Madras naturally aroused reasonable expectations. But what has been done is to impose punitive police. The organisation and struggles are conducted peacefully and there has been no instance of violence or molestation. On the other hand numerous cases brought against the workers have been quashed because of trumped-up charges.

It is not unoften that the combination of reactionary landlords and the unchanged steel-frame services raises the bogey of 'non-violence' and 'truth' in peril, but the source is uninspiring and its hollowness is self-evident. If my reading of the situation in Kerala is correct, the time has come for breaking the limitations of provincial autonomy. Otherwise the role of the Congress Ministry would soon turn out to be one of maintaining the 'status quo' at all costs. Indeed, repression and conviction of workers are symptomatic of the way the wind is already blowing.

¹ Ayillyath Kuttiari Gopalan Nambiar, born on 1 October 1904 in Kannur District of Northern Kerala and educated in Tellichery. By the time he became a teacher, India's Independence movement was becoming energized by Mahatma Gandhi. Gopalan took part in the Khilafat Movement which prompted a marked change in his outlook, transforming him into a dedicated fulltime social and political worker. In 1927 he joined the Indian National Congress and began playing an active role in the Khadi Movement and the upliftment of Harijans. He was arrested for participating in the salt satyagraha in 1930. While in prison he became exposed to leftist thinking and became a member of the Congress Socialist Party and later the Communist Party of India when it finally took shape in Kerala in 1939. He led the hunger march from Malabar region to Madras in 1937 and the Malabar Jatha in support of the movement for responsible government in Travancore. The outbreak of the Second World War in 1939 promoted an upsurge in activism against British domination, and Gopalan was again arrested. But in 1942 he escaped from prison and remained at large till the end of the war in 1945. He was arrested again shortly after the end of the war and was still behind bars when India became Independent on 15 August 1947. He was released a few weeks later. Thereafter he was a member of the Lok Sabha for 5 consecutive terms till his death on 22 March 1977 and became the first leader of opposition in the Parliament of India. He also wrote extensively. His autobiography *In the Cause of the People* has been translated into many languages. His other works include *For Land, Around the World, Work in Parliament*, and *Collected Speeches*, all in Malayalam.

53. Chhindawara Kisan Conference

R.K. Jalodkar's statement on the Chhindawara Kisan Conference, *Bombay Chronicle*, 15 April 1939

Mr R.K. Jalodkar, Secretary, District Kisan Sabha, Chhindawara (CP) has issued the following report to the Press:

Propaganda was made in every nook and corner of the district by the Reception Committee formed under the chairmanship of Mr Atifatali Khan with the result that the morning of the 9th April saw Kisans pouring down from all corners to join the conference. The Town Hall was decorated by the Kisan slogans and was packed to its full capacity while a great number had to remain outside for want of sufficient in the verandah.

At exact one o'clock Mr Bhaiyaji Kulkarni, a Kisan leader from Jubbulpore and also the President elect of the conference arrived in the Town Hall amidst great enthusiasm and expectation.

At the beginning of the conference some interested persons tried to spoil the smooth working of the conference by creating disturbance but the Kisan cooled them. Mr Atifatali Khan delivered his welcome speech bringing home to the Kisans the importance and the purposes of the present conference.

Mr Bhaiyaji Kulkarni in his presidential speech dealt with the conditions of Kisans and explained to them their demands. He further asked them to organize themselves into local Kisan Sabha under the District Kisan Sabha and to carry out their activities and struggles further on unceasingly for support and strength of our ministers in the Cabinet.

Later on the following resolutions on general demands of Kisans were put to vote and passed unanimously: (1) Abolition of debts, (2) Proprietary of peasants, (3) 50 per cent reduction in land revenue, (4) Anewari be fixed through the village Panch, (5) Full remission of the 2nd Kist of land revenue of 1939, (6) Free grazing in Government Forest, (7) Ejectment to stopped, (8) Facility for the education, (9) Establishment for village panchayats with limited powers of civil and criminal cases, (10) Special consideration for the damage crops due to heavy rains and hail storms.

Mr G.R. Trivedi, Advocate, Pt Shivdayal of Binjhawara, Bakaram Khare, President of Betul Kisan Sabha and others spoke in the conference. The conference ended with the shouting of Kisan slogans.

54. Kisans should strengthen the Congress—Jawaharlal Nehru

Speech of Jawaharlal Nehru at a meeting of Kisans at Karchana in Allahabad district, 16 April 1939, *SWJN*, Vol. 9, pp. 334-35

The hands of the popular ministers are tied and the Government of India Act has placed one hundred and one hurdles in the way of any popular measure having a smooth passage through the provincial legislatures. The Congress has been doing its best through the legislatures to bring relief to the tenants. The first act in that connection was to stay proceedings for realizing arrears of rent. This was followed by other measures like the debt relief acts and so on. At present, the UP legislature is engaged in changing the old laws of tenancy. The tenancy bill has passed through several stages, but many more remain to be gone through, and I hope that the Congress Party in the assembly would pilot the bill successfully. I would, however, want the Kisans to remember that in a House consisting 228 members matters have to move slowly. There are a number of zamindars who are opposed to the bill and whose points of view should be considered during the passage of the bill. The bill will again have to go through the provincial council, which consists of men of landed interests who would fight hard against such popular measures. It is, therefore, the duty of the Kisans to strengthen the hands of the Congress organisation so that it may fight their battles and win for them what they valued most.

The interests of the Kisans are common, be they Hindus or Muslims. The Kisans whether they are Hindus or Muslims have to pay rents. They both have to acquire rights over the land that they cultivate. They have to work shoulder to shoulder in establishing their rights and in getting their wrongs redressed and their burdens relieved. The Congress, having taken up the cause of the

kisans, had made no distinction between one kisan and another. It is, therefore, the bounden duty of every kisan, be he a Hindu or a Muslim, to strengthen the Congress organisation. There are some people, who, in order to break the solidarity of the kisans, have introduced communal considerations into their ranks. The kisans should be very careful with such people.

It is also not proper for the kisans to run to the ministers seeking jobs and other favours. It would undermine the prestige of the Congress and affect its work. Nor should the villagers go to the police for the settlement of their petty disputes and quarrels. They should decide these among themselves.

The kisans should not also imagine that their problems would end with the solution of the questions concerning rent and revenue. They, being the people who supplied men and money for the defence and the running of the government of the country, should know what is going to outside the country. If they would only know what is going on in China at present, they would realize that the tenants in the villages are not free from the effects of war. There is the danger of war ahead of them, which may be just as big as the last Great War. The kisans should also realize that they possess the right to ask the British Government as to why Indians should fight for them. Certain laws are being enacted by the government in England, which would compel Indians to fight British wars. Kisans should therefore see whether their interests would be served if Indians were compelled to join such a war. In other words, kisans would have to ask the government whether such a war was for the freedom of India or not. If not, then they should refuse to fight.

In the elections to the *halqa* committees that will engage you during the next week, I would like to urge upon you to give sufficient chance to the Muslim members to get into the Congress committees.

It would only be through the combined efforts of the Hindus and the Muslims that the Congress organisation would be strengthened.

55. Agrarian Unrest in Sind

Congress appeals on behalf of tenants in Sind, *Bombay Chronicle*, 17 April 1939

Karachi

A strong plea that Government should forthwith resume Jagiri lands and remove the long standing grievances of tenants 'by freeing them from the yoke of Jagirdars' is made out by the Congress Party in the Sind. Assembly in the course of a memorandum submitted by them to the Special Officer, appointed by the Government to conduct an enquiry into agrarian unrest in Sind.

The Officer, Khan Bahadur Nur Nabu Collector of Dadu, has completed the enquiry and is now engaged in drafting his report which will be submitted by the Government before the end of this month.

The Congress memorandum *inter alia* states that Government are losing annually land revenue to the tune of Rs 19 lakhs which otherwise could be collected from these Jagiri lands measuring over eleven lakhs of acres. Here are two kinds of Jagiri or alienated lands in Sind, firstly those in which there are hereditary occupants who stand in the same relationship to the Jagirdars as the Ryotwari holders of land do in regard to the Government.

Secondly, those lands in which there are no such hereditary occupants but they have all the Zamindari rights therein. In respect of both these kinds of lands, Jagirdars of the alliances do not pay land revenue. They pay only water rate called 'Hakabo'. This is nominal in non-barrage areas. It comes to about one half of the assessment rate per acre.

As an alternative to the resumption of these lands, the memorandum urges that all Jagiri lands should be compulsorily surveyed at the cost of Jagirdars and the rights of all tenants carefully recorded. All direct dealings of Jagirdars with tenants should be ended and Government should utilize its machinery for water supply to the tenants and collect dues from them on behalf of the Jagirdars.

It may be mentioned in this connection that the above subject had been frequently discussed on the floor of the Sind Assembly by way of private resolutions or adjournment motions by the Congress Party on the situation at Tando Jam in Hyderabad District. The Government now proposes to bring necessary legislation to solve the problem which has been on the anvil even before Sind was separated from Bombay.

56. Miraculous Resurrections

Behar Herald, 18 April 1939

18 April 1939

Christ has risen and with Him have risen the Kisans of India. It is stated that having risen from the deep and prolonged slumber of self-forgetfulness, Kisans of India assembled in a momentous Conference at Gaya and decided after prolonged deliberations to batter down the supposed to be impregnable fortress of British Imperialism 'in order to bring about complete national independence and a democratic state of the Indian people' to be transformed 'ultimately' into a 'Kisan Mazdoor Raj'. Not having had the privilege of witnessing this remarkable resurrection, I am not in a position to give the likeness of even a lifeless photographic representation of this gathering. But from such Press reports as are available it appears to me that the prolonged spell of slumber which Kisans are said to have enjoyed or suffered, has not, after all, done them much harm. Evidently, the resurrected ones have taken new bodies and learnt a new language. Poor, ignorant and illiterate Kisans of India have learnt to speak a language which not even many in Oxford can use with skill. As far the physical transformation they have undergone, the metamorphosis is certainly incredible for its astounding character. If the Gaya Conference represents the Kisans of India which it claims to do, then the generation of Bhairo Singhs, Etwari Mahtos, Paran Mandals, Shabashali Nias and the like we have known in our villages, must be deemed to have passed away yielding place to an incomparably more cultured generation with finally polished names which in themselves inspire awe and respect. Some of the resurrected peasants according to the Press report, are Mr Jayaprakash Narayan, Mr P.C. Joshi, Mr Indulal Yajaik, Mr Shaibnath Banerjee, Mr Bipin Bihari Ganguli and last but not least, Srimati Bimal Pratiba Devi. In the face of this fact, who can deny that the resurrection was more than a miracle?

57. Report on political events in Bihar during the first half of April 1939

Report on Political Events in Bihar for the first half of April 1939, Hallett Papers, Acc. No. 3948, NAI

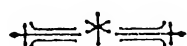
Patna

24 April 1939

The All India Kisan Sabha conference was held at Gaya on 9th and 10th April and extended to the early hours of the 17th. The attendance was claimed by the promoters at 1½ lakhs, but never extended a quarter of that figure and towards the end dwindled rapidly. Financially the meeting must have been disappointing as the cost was estimated at Rs 25,000 and it appears that not more

than Rs 10,000 was collected—a good deal of it by exerting pressure on zamindars and business people and also by pressure on the local Congress Committees. The exhibition was a failure. The attendance of leaders and representatives of left wing organisations from outside Bihar was large. Those included Messrs. Mohanlal Gautam, P.C. Joshi, Professor Ranga, Indulal Yajnik, Jamaluddin Bukhari and a large contingent from Bengal headed by Shibnath Banerjee and Niharendu Datta Majumdar. The main feature of the meeting was the obvious cleavage between the two main groups, one headed by the President, Acharya Narendra Dev, who wished to keep the Kisan Sabha within the Congress fold and develop the two organisations side by side stressing the ameliorative programme; the other led by the General Secretary, Swami Sahajanand and the Bengal group, who were then breaking away from the Congress and concentrating on the direct appeal to the masses, intensified agitation and a revolt against the Congress Ministries. Following this line of cleavage, the resolutions (of which there were 24) fell into two well-defined groups; the one stressing a constructive programme and the other stressing agitation. Ultimately the views of the more moderate section were allowed to prevail, but not without heated discussion in the Subjects Committee. At one time it appeared that the extremists would succeed in getting their way, but a telling speech by Babu Jayaprakash Narayan appealing for the preservation of unity resulted in more moderate counsels prevailing. This was the most important speech of the Conference but the impression created upon those who heard it was that Babu Jayaprakash Narayan while professing allegiance to Congress Ministry has really aligned himself with Swami Sahajanand. This is reflected in the two important resolutions Nos 18 and 19. No. 18 which is said to have been drafted by Babu Jayaprakash himself, insisted upon non-compromising opposition to Federation, a united front between the Kisan Sabha and the labour movement against Imperialism, intensification of present struggle, immediate implementing by Provincial Government of Kisan volunteer corps. This was immediately followed by resolution no. 19 which vehemently attacked the Bihar Ministry, condemned the Congress-Zamindar pact, called for the implementation of election pledges and the abolition of the Zamindari system in Bihar. Although an outward unity was achieved, it is not easy to see how this will continue with the President and the General Secretary leading divergent groups. It is obvious from the general trend of the Conference that the Bihar leaders are not likely to moderate their views and that we may look for an intensified campaign of agitation and this the more likely because the achievements of the movement up to date have been so unimpressive. Eighteen months' campaigning has produced no tangible result in Bihar to counter balance the reductions of rent secured to the tenantry by the Ministry.

2. Meanwhile as the harvesting of the *rabi* crop draws to a close there has been some decrease in local agitation but no permanent settlement of disputes has yet been reached. At Reora, Jadunandan Sharma has not yet been able to divide any of the lands allotted to the kisans or even the crop. The Arbitration Committee in the Barahiya Tal has again come to a standstill. The situation at Murier (Shahabad) has deteriorated and the zamindar's party are getting restive and threaten to retaliate if better protection is not given to them. At Kisans meetings held in Champaran, attended by Jogendra Sukal and Kedarmani Sukal, Kisans have been told to organize and forcibly seize property of which they have been deprived by zamindars. There are also reports of plans for Satyagraha in Muzaffarpur and to extend activities in the Sasaram and Bhabua Sub-divisions of Shahabad. Surajgarha police station (Monghyr) is also disturbed. A Kisan volunteer corps is being formed in Dumaria police station (Gaya) with the object of doing satyagraha there and an extension of agitation is expected in Darbhanga...



58. Petty Zamindars need not fear

Sahajanand's statement on petty zamindars, *Bombay Chronicle*, 26 April 1939

Swami Sahajanand Saraswati, General Secretary, All India Kisan Sabha has issued the following statement:

Mischievous propaganda on behalf of the interested quarters is going on ceaselessly to misrepresent the Kisan Sabha and its activities so far as the petty zamindars are concerned.

It has been brought to my notice by those who really wish the Kisans and the Kisan Sabha well that a sort of belief is gaining ground in the minds of the petty zamindars who mainly depend for their livelihood on the cultivation of their lands, that the Kisan Sabha is out, if not in theory at least in practice, to deprive them of the little lands they possess. They honestly believe that this is the sum-total of the activities of the Kisan Sabha.

I see clearly that the big zamindars, other vested interests and their allies are moving very cleverly in the matter and want to serve their end by hoodwinking their brethren—the petty zamindars and the public at large. Hence I deem it my imperative duty to make the position of the Kisan Sabha clear once more in this connection.

From the very beginning it has been the duty and outlook of the Kisan Sabha to bring the petty zamindars in its fold and give them ample protection so far as their legitimate rights are concerned.

The very constitutions of some of the Provincial Kisan Sabhas including Bihar Sabha have made it abundantly clear and anybody having any doubt in this regard may consult these constitutions and satisfy himself. In fact it has never entered the mind of those who guide the activities of the Kisan Sabha to dispossess the petty zamindars of their lands and thus force them and their dependents to starve. To us they are as much Kisans as others including agricultural labourers and we sincerely desire that there should be real and practical co-operation, mutual understandings and adjustment between these three sections of the kisans and there should not be left the slightest ground for friction.

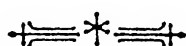
We have instructed our workers to act accordingly and on behalf of the All India Kisan Sabha I once more warn them seriously against any activities which tend to create even the remotest misunderstanding among these different sections of the Kisan.

Of course it does not mean that the Kisan Sabha will tolerate the tyranny of the petty zamindars over the other two sections of Kisans due to their false notion of prestige as zamindars or under the influence and guidance of the enemies of Kisan Sabha.

It is the game of the big zamindars and enemies of the Kisan Sabha to create the troubles with the kisans with a belief that the petty zamindars can easily be exploited to fight their battles and serve their end and bear the brunt of the trouble that will inevitably ensue. I therefore, warn the petty zamindars to be on their guard lest they be made scape-goats of others.

In the end I make an earnest appeal to the petty zamindars to give us an opportunity to deal fairly with their legitimate demands and this they can very well do by joining the Kisan Sabha, and if, unfortunately, they cannot see their way to do so, they may place their grievances in an organized way before the Kisan Sabha.

I am glad to mention here the All India Kisan Sabha has recently passed at Gaya a resolution with regard to the petty zamindars on the above-mentioned lines.



59. (a) Activities of the All-Malabar Peasants' Union:
From Intelligence Bureau Report, entitled,
'Communist Activity Amongst the Peasants in Malabar'
Home Political, File No. 7/9/41, NAI¹

The move by the peasants of Malabar to organise themselves on a militant socialist basis first came to notice in the beginning of 1936, as a result of propaganda carried on by E.M. Sankaran Nambudripad, E.P. Gopalan, A. Ramachandra Nedungadi and others.

In March 1936 the peasant leaders decided to form an All-Malabar Peasants' Union and to hold a conference as early as possible. For this purpose a propaganda committee was formed with Moyarath Sankaran as convener. Vishnu Baharathiyan, A.K. Gopalan, K.A. Keraleeyan² (all of Chirakkal Taluk), E.C. Kunhikannan Nambiyar of Kurumbranad Taluk, P.N. Krishnan Menon of Ernad Taluk, E.P. Gopalan of Walluvanad Taluk and K. Sankaranarayanan of Ponnani Taluk as members. Side by side with this, another committee comprising E.M. Sankaran Namboodiripad, P. Narayana Nayar, C. Kunhiraman Nayar, K.A. Keraleeyan and K.O. Kunhikrishnan Nambiyar was appointed to prepare the constitution and rules for the union. All these leaders were then regarded as Congress Socialists. Most of them have been either convicted or detained since the outbreak of the war under the Defence of India Rules for anti-war and Communist activities.

These leaders carried on their organisation work through meetings and conferences throughout 1936 and 1937 with the result that Taluk Peasants' Unions with several village unions under them, came into existence on militant revolutionary lines in Chirakkal, Kottayam, Kurumbranad, Walluvanad, Ponnani and Wynaad Taluks in Malabar district and Kasaragod Taluk in South Kanara district. Subsequently Taluk Unions formed in Calicut and Ernad Taluks also.

In order to direct and co-ordinate the work of these unions and to make them pursue a common programme the leaders and representatives of these unions met on 14 March 1938 and formed a committee with K.A. Keraleeyan as convener to do the preliminary work necessary to start a central body called the All-Malabar Peasants' Union. The workers again met at Kalliasseri on 5 June 1938 and elected temporarily K.A. Keraleeyan as General Secretary and E.P. Gopalan and P.M. Krishna Menon as Joint Secretaries of the Union. When the All-Malabar Peasants' Conference was held at Chevayur on 18 December 1938 presided over by A.K. Gopalan, P. Narayana Nayar was elected President and K.A. Keraleeyan as General Secretary of the All-Malabar Peasants' Union. All these are now in jail. There has been no further election of office-bearers.

The jurisdiction of this Union extended over the area of North Malabar and Kasaragod Taluk of South Kanara district. Its stated aims were:

1. to safeguard the social, political and economic interests of the peasants of the locality, and
2. to work conjointly with the workers and other exploited classes for the complete independence of India, economic as well as political. By peasant is meant small peasant proprietors, agriculturists and also agricultural labourers. Any person coming under any of the above categories and desirous of joining the union shall sign the union pledge form and pay subscription which is three pies per mensem per member.

but actually it was part and parcel of the communist appeal to the peasantry.

During 1938 the All-Malabar Peasants' Union carried its membership drive as well as a vigorous agitation through its subordinate unions, into the innermost parts of the district through meetings, conferences, jathas, etc. The peasants of North Malabar, especially of Chirakkal and Kottayam Taluks and of Kasaragod Taluk in South Kanara district, fell in easily with the attractive revolutionary

appeals from the Socialist leaders, partly because of the primitive dictatorial ways of the local jenmis in collecting illegal *mamuls* and partly due to the large number of educated unemployed. According to their own report, there were 83 Unions functioning in Chirakkal Tal in 1939, with about 10,000 members. It is reported that there were about 34 Unions, with an aggregate membership of 10,000 in Kasaragod Taluk at the end of 1938. Figures for other taluks are not available.

As a result of the mischievous propaganda referred to the peasants' unions of Chirakkal and Kasaragod Taluks and some in Kottayam Taluk took the law into their own hands and committed a number of illegal acts. They also brought into existence militant corps of training volunteers. These volunteers were intended to do propaganda in villages and to protect the Union interests even at the risk of their lives. They were trained in drill to keep them fit. By the end of 1938 social boycott, criminal intimidation and trespass, personal violence, a no-rent campaign and cases of arson were perpetrated by members of these unions against jenmis as well as against local persons who showed any tendency to criticise or oppose them or refused to join the Union. Judicial enquiries were conducted by the union members themselves and their decision was enforced. Rent collections were partly paralysed and a no-tax campaign was talked of by the leaders. To put down this attempt at parallel government a large number were prosecuted, the police staff was strengthened and two additional police stations were opened in the affected area.

In the beginning of January 1939 N.G. Ranga, the Andhra peasant leader, presided over the Kasaragod Taluk Peasants' Conference and another Peasants' Conference at Blathur in Chirakkal Taluk. He also made a tour in some of the interior villages in Kasaragod, Chirakkal, Kottayam and Kurumbranad Taluks and gave an impetus to the movement.

Towards the middle of 1939 the movement was checked by the steps taken by the authorities while the appointment of the Malabar Tenancy Enquiry Committee also had a sobering effect.

When war was declared the leaders who were Communists, began to carry on anti-war and anti-recruitment propaganda throughout the district and in this were assisted by the volunteers referred to above. Since then much anti-war and communist propaganda through secret meetings and illegal leaflets has been done and Union members have been advised to prepare themselves along with other anti-imperialist forces for a violent mass revolution.

The All-Malabar Peasants' Union is completely under communist control. Though most of the leaders are now in jail the organisation is still active. Its aims are dangerous to the public peace and order and it is essential that the Union and all its branches in the district of Malabar and the Kasaragod Taluk of South Kanara District be declared illegal and its organisation broken up. The All-Malabar Peasants' Association and All-Malabar Karshak Sangh. The order declaring the union as a unlawful body should include these names as well.

Extracts from speeches of leaders and copies of other literature in furtherance of the activities of the Union are appended:

1. Extract from a printed pamphlet entitled 'How the Malabar peasants should fight and for what?', published by the All-Malabar Karshak Sangh and printed in 'Prabhatham' Press, Calicut.

'The object of the organisation is the establishment of economic equality—a state without British Rule, or landlordism or capitalism. This is our immediate programme'.

'For that purpose we must have a Karshak Sangh in each amson. All peasants and small landlords should join its. Able men should be entrusted with the work of the Sangh. The redress of all local grievances should be effected only through the sangh. Their (peasants) opposition to high-handedness of jenmies, money lenders and Government officials who receive bribes should be made through the sangh. Peasants should be made class-conscious, by organising meetings and other demonstrations.

2. Extract from the speech of B.P. Gopalan made at the 2nd Chirakkal Taluk peasants' conference held in 1938.

'You have realized that our grievances will not be redressed by petitions or demonstrations, or deputations. You might have realised by this time we have to fight against a force which has no sympathy or sense of justice to give us our rights on demand. It is not enough if we demand our rights one after the other; we must build up our strength and organisation so as to be able to snatch what we want. If we want to eradicate our starvation and poverty it is clear that we will have to stop the practice of surrendering all the produce that we make to the jennies as rent to the Government as tax and to the moneylender as interest. The peasant will not have security of protection if they do not destroy once for all the practice of the 'few' idle men robbing the 'many' of the fruits of their labour. The objects of the Karshak Sanghs are to rescue the peasants from the economic exploitation and the class oppression and win for them complete economic control and political power which are absolutely necessary to enable those who work to live in happiness and contentment! ...

'If we want the National struggle to succeed we should see that not a pie goes as tax for fattening the police and military who are the guardians of imperialism, When traitors among ourselves join the Government for their selfish ends they will be shown the power of our organisation and the fighting spirit. Those who help the Government which harms our interest should not be given a grain of paddy or a pie as rent. When the peasants give notice of a no-rent campaign there should be a strong organisation to back it up. It is not a mob but a well disciplined force that is needed. Our immediate programme is to build up such an organisation and force'.

3. Extracts from the annual report presented at 3rd Chirakkal taluk Karshak conference in 1939.

'The jennies and the vested interests were terrified at the united work done to create class consciousness and unity among the peasants with the ultimate object of establishing "Kisan-Mazdoor Raj". ...'

'The place of the Karshak Sangh in the fight for independence, the opposition of peasants against imperialist war and federation, the determination of peasants to establish a "Kisan-Mazdoor Raj" and their close participation with the other anti-imperialist forces in the fight for independence' have all been well demonstrated at these conferences.

Mention is made in this report about the various cases charged by the police against the peasants and stress laid that they are mostly false or instituted at the instance of vested interests.'

4. Extract from the note book written by one V. Narayan, a trained volunteer, on how to organise peasants and labourers. The study class was held by A.K. Gopalan.

'Peasants will not attend if a meeting is organized under congress auspices. They will attend only if they know that it is a peasants' meeting. Congress meetings will be attended only by peasants and labourers who are class conscious. At the peasants meetings the grievances of the peasants and labourers, their cause, and their demands should be properly dealt with. Stress should be laid on the high salary of Government officials and how it should be remedied. Then they will know that along with British rule capitalism should also go. For this purpose all should join the congress. There is police repression in the interior villages. Police should be abused severely at these meetings. Then even those who are afraid of the police will come close to us. It is enough if there are 10 class conscious peasants. Stress their immediate demands. Then the jennies will oppose. Then there will be a strike. If the jennies oppose our cause will be strengthened for we will have more following. Strengthen it. It is on these lines that we should build up organisation.'

Extract from a Malayalam cyclostyled leaflet entitled 'Communist news and notes' issued by Calicut Taluk committee of the Kerala Communist Party.

'In each village there should be a Karshak Sangh consisting of at least 25 members. As far as possible real agriculturists should be enrolled as members. It is a weakness of our organisation that only educated young men join our various party units. We have not effected contact with elderly peasants in the villages. Our propaganda work has not reached them.'

5. Extract from the Malayalam cyclostyled party circular No. 37 issued by the Kerala Committee of the CPI.

'Oppose in an organised manner the high handedness of the jenmies with regard to the increase of rent, lease renewals, illegal collections etc. and strengthen Karshaka sangh organisations. Organise hunger marches (Peasants) to meet Thasildars and Revenue Divisional Officers to represent the pitiable condition to which the people are reduced on account of the ever increasing rise in the price of rice. (This is the very important matter at this juncture). The price of rice is increasing steadily. It is almost double, and in some places it is 2½ times. Though the same condition prevailed in the last war the price of pepper and coconut were high then. Now it is not so. There are reports from many places that the poor are contemplating to loot. This mentality should be converted into a planned effort and an organised fight. Mere looting will not prosper our movement. From every village a jatha will go to the Thasildar. Bigger jathas should go to the sub-Divisional Officer. In short, these jathas should give shape to the growing discontent of the masses. If the jathas fail to achieve results (they will meet with only failure) the following action should be taken. The hunger march committee should first enquire and find out what price the karshaks got for their paddy in *Kanni* (Malayalam era). Then calculate what price should be given for a of rice at that rate. Add to it a profit of an anna in the rupee. People who go to shops to purchase rice should get the quantity required pay, according to the above rate and walk away. This should be done in an organised way by large number of people and not by individuals separately''.

¹ Despite its submission to the authorities in 1941, the report does focus on the All Malabar Peasants' Union activities of 1939 in Malabar

² Keraleeyan, K.A. (1910-94), born at Chirakkal taluk, Malabar district of Madras Presidency, got into political movement by participating in the protest against Simon Commission, 1928; participated in the Salt Satyagraha and arrested in 1930, joined in Congress Socialist Party in 1934, formed 'All Malabar Karshaka Sangam' in 1937 and was its first Secretary, became a member of Communist Party of India in 1939; organized peasants against the price rise of rice at Moragha, Talipparambu taluk, which ended up in police firing; arrested in 1942, published a magazine called *Karshakan* in Malayalam, 1952-74, and CPI Calicut District Secretary, 1964-67

(b) Anti-Janmi Agitation

National Front, 27 August 1939

'...The combined terrorism of the landlords and the police has driven the peasants and labourers to the last pitch of desperation. Janmis send their goondas to break up the Kisan conferences and assault workers and then prosecute kisans and kisan leaders on cooked up charges. Thus hundreds of Congressmen engaged in Kisan work have been sent to jail. A tried and trusted Congressman like Com. Bharatiyan was jailed on a charge of theft. Com. Gopalan, a member of the AICC, is being prosecuted for delivering a speech at a Kisan conference.

To make matters worse extra police has been posted in villages to terrorise the peasants into submission. But undaunted by all this persecution and terrorism, the kisans of the Province had forged ahead during the last two years, under the banner of the Kisan Sabha and secured an Agricultural Relief Act from the Ministry. The kisans now bid fair to secure substantial reforms in the whole land tenure and tenancy system as a result of the labours of this committee.'

60. Report on political events in Bihar during the second half of April 1939

Hallet Papers, Acc. No. 3948, NAI

Patna
4 May 1939

It is too early yet to appreciate the reactions which are likely to follow on the resignation of Mr Subhas Chandra Bose and the election of Dr Rajendra Prasad as emergency President of the Congress. But it is probable that the victory of the right wing will be followed by an intensification by left wing agitation. Early repercussions are possible in connection with the Kisan movement in this province. The international situation is engaging more attention and anti-war day meetings were held on the 23rd of April at various centers including Gaya, Jamshedpur, Ranchi and Jharia advocating non-participation in Imperialist wars and that if sides must be taken, India should side against the British Government. The district board elections have produced a period of political confusion and there is much opposition to Congress candidates. Though the elections have been officially boycotted by the Muslim League, reports from Bhagalpur and Patna indicate that the League is supporting Hindu candidates standing in opposition to the official Congress nominees. In Darbhanga all Congress candidates are being opposed, and the Kisan Sabha is backing several of the Independents. In several places Socialists are helping the non-Congressmen. The Hindu Sabha is providing the chief opposition in Bhagalpur led by Babu Padmaraj Jain, Secretary of the All India Maha Sabha. In Shahabad Babu Budhan Rai Verma, the President of the District Congress Committee, has resigned as a protest. In Gaya a Kisan Sabha majority has been assured by the official Congress allotment of 22 out of 30 elected seats to this body. In Ranchi there is a keen contest between the Congress and the Adibasi Movement. It is reported that the Adibasis have begun to use the slogans 'Mahatma Birsa Munda Kisans Jai' and this development will require watching as Birsa Munda was the leader of a movement which attempted an insurrection of the Mundas at the close of the last century. They are also reported to have used violence against their adversaries. The wave of unrest in schools still continues and fresh troubles has started in Gaya at the Zila school and also at the Haridas Seminary. A flag incident at Monghyr, said to have been organised by Anil Mitra, nearly resulted in a communal outbreak which was diverted by prompt police measures. Further incidents have taken place at Dinapur (Patna), Dehri and Nasriganj (Shahabad). The management of the Jehanabad High School has been taken over by Government.

2. The local effects of the All India Kisan conference held last month at Gaya have been small except that they have encouraged the local kisans to have further disregard for law and order... After the Conference, Swami Sahajanand went on an electioneering tour in Tirhut where he addressed six meetings in Saran and two in Darbhanga. On his return from tour he issued a statement appealing to petty zamindars to throw in their lot with the Kisan Sabha with which their interests are linked and assuring them that the Kisan Sabha does not aim at dispossessing them, but the big zamindars by whom they are exploited. This attempt to lure the petty zamindars into his camp has been received with considerable skepticism and it is hardly consistent with the agitation which has been going on for some months against the petty zamindars of Muriar in Shahabad. The situation at Muriar continues to deteriorate. The Kisans have defied the orders passed under section 145, Criminal Procedure Code, and have attempted to take possession of lands declared by the court to be in possession of the zamindars. There have been several prosecutions for looting of crops. The zamindars have shown an increasing restiveness and were narrowly prevented from breaking up a Kisan meeting on the 14th. A renewal of so-called satyagraha

has been threatened, but has not yet begun. The situation in Bahera thana of Darbhanga has deteriorated and the Kisan movement is spreading. On the 16th of April a dispute, not directly connected with the Kisan movement, but fostered by it, flared up and resulted in a clash. It appears that the villagers had obstructed a cart load of rice belonging to the *maliks* and later assaulted one of them. In retaliation the *maliks* and their supporters turned out in force and fired on the villagers wounding nine of them. At Amwari desolatory satyagraha continues. The Kisans continue to ignore completely the proceedings under section 145. Pandit Rahul Sankritayan and several others have been convicted under section 379 in connection with crop-cutting at Amwari on 29th of February and have been sentenced to six months' rigorous imprisonment. There is a lull in Gaya district following upon the All India Kisan Conference, but trouble continues in Monghyr. The arbitration committee in the Barahiya Tal dispute has still not made its decisions and Karjanand Sharma continues to encourage agitation. Recently a mob of 500 Kisans armed with *lathis* under his leadership surrounded a Government *khalihan* to oppose thrashing operations. In Bariar thana of the same district, the zamindars have ceased to let lands on *batai*, as they are afraid of being deprived of possession and a serious economic situation is anticipated before the end of the year. Three cases have been reported, one from Gaya and two from Darbhanga, in which the zamindari *kutcheries* are said to have been looted and from district there is a report of meetings to organize the forcible taking of possessions of Bakasht lands during the next sowing season in July ...

61. Satyagraha by Kisans

Amrita Bazar Patrika, 7 May 1939

6 May 1939

Important developments are expected in the Kisan Satyagraha in Monghyr going on since the 2nd May last with the arrival of Swami Sahajanand Saraswati, General Secretary of the All-India Kisan Sabha, and his lieutenants Mr Shamnandan Singh, MLA, and Babu Ganga Saran who reached Monghyr by today's midday train. Pandit Karjananda Sharma and Sjt Anil Mitra, Kisan leaders were arrested under the Railway Act for alleged holding up train traffic as a mark of Kisan protest against Government measures. The Satyagrahis about 250 in number, came to the Fort gates for picketing New Courts and were pushed back by the Police, guarding the gates and clearing the traffic. In course of a melee, some Satyagrahis are reported to have received injuries and Sjt Binode Mukherji, a young Socialist worker, who was leading a section of the Kisans is said to have been taken to the Hospital unconscious.

A wave of revolutionary ferment is surging over Monghyr. The Kisans of the Barahiya Tal marched in a body to Monghyr to offer Satyagraha in the Court under the leadership of Comrade Anil Mitra, who was deputed for the task by Pt Karjanand Sharma, Secretary, District Kisan Sabha, under whose guidance the Kisans have been carrying on their legitimate fight so long.

The Satyagraha was launched on the morning of 2nd May. The local authorities called in services of cavalry and a number of constables to prevent the Satyagrahis from entering the Fort area. There was a stiff struggle and the Kisans had to yield before the force exhibited by the authorities.

On 3rd May a procession led by Comrades Binode Mookherjee and Karjanand Sharma paraded through the streets of the town and there was brisk collection of funds to keep the struggle going. The same day Pt Karjanand and Comrade Medini, one of the veterans of Reora Satyagraha, were arrested under Section 128 of the Railway Act and removed to Bhagalpore Central Jail.

On the 4th May about 100 Kisans headed by Comrade Anil Mitra and the wife of Pt Karjanand offered Satyagraha on the railway line at Monghyr Station. Both of them were arrested and removed to Bhagalpore. The Kisans were also arrested, put in a van and removed to an unknown destination.

The remaining batch of Kisans led by Com. Binode Mookerjee launched Satyagraha at the Fort Gate. They remained peaceful throughout. They were pushed back and dispersed by the police, in course of which several persons were injured. Com. Binode was severely injured and had to be removed to the hospital where he regained consciousness after one hour. About 20 kisans received injuries and medical aid had to be rendered.

Anil Mitra, young Socialist worker was arrested yesterday morning by the Railway Police while leading a batch of Kisan Satyagrahis who squatted on the railway lines at Monghyr and held up the train traffic for over one and half hours. Satyagrahis about 70 in number including the wife of Karjanand Sharma, Kisans leader, who was arrested on May 3 were taken to some unknown destination.

The third batch of Kisan Satyagrahis about 700 in number on their way to Monghyr were made to detrain at Lakshisarai for traveling without ticket and they are reported to have started marching on foot to Monghyr.

62. On the Barahiya Tal Agrarian Dispute¹

Extracts from the Government of Bihar, Special Section, Confidential File No. 29(VII)/1939, Bihar State Archives

Patna
8 May 1939

Copy of a Hindi leaflet under the heading of 'Kisanon ka Artnand' (Sorrowful Cry of Kisans)

Why were the kisans of the Tal compelled to launch Satyagraha? People all round enquire today what is happening in the Tal? On behalf of the zamindars it has been propagated that the kisans of the Tal commit loot. Very great has been the influence of their propagation in the capitalist world and on the strength of their wealth they made the officers even their helpers (sic) to some extent. The helplessness of we, kisans, is not known to a large number of people and the very few who know it, conceal it. Therefore some interesting facts about the condition of the Tal are being given here.

Government Measures

In the name of maintaining order in the Tal, the government so far has spent more than Rs 60,000. For the last three years, the mounted and the armed police, the *lathial* police and magistrates are being always sent there. This year the sub-divisional officer and a deputy magistrate, along with 4 sub-inspectors of Police and others, encamped in the Tal for months together. But what have they been doing? Why is the problem of the Tal not being solved? If there is nothing the matter with the Tal, why the government money is being wasted like water?

Oppressions of the Zamindars and lathi charge on passersby

There was a similar agitation two years back. There was a consternation at the Tal; but the skulls of the kisans were not broken and the kisans were not compelled to die of starvation. But this year, from the very beginning, more than 500 kisans have been assaulted so far. They got their heads, hands and legs broken. On 19 November, a brutal attack was made at the Barahiya Tal on a batch of 75 kisan volunteers. They were made naked. After this the *lathials* of the zamindars assaulted a

number of kisans at Mahramchak and Repora. The hands of a 70 years old woman and of a 75 years old man were permanently disabled. It has become a matter of common occurrence to oppress the passersby. On the 26th January, the whole country observed Independence Day. Murl Mahto and Munshi Mahto of Kamarpur were very cruelly beaten up on the road near Barahiya. They were permanently disabled. Only on 24th April at the Barahiya Bazar, one Somar Gorhi was so cruelly assaulted that he became senseless (sic). The event which transcends all occurred on the 17th February when, at Pali, a lathi charge was made against the kisans, their wives and children who had gathered near the camp of the sub-divisional officer and their belongings were broken and thrown into the river. Their bullocks and cows also were beaten with lathis. The goats also were beaten (sic). The *lathials* came up to Pali village. And all these happened in the very presence of the sub-divisional officer and due to his mistake. Only recently on 9th April the kisans were cruelly assaulted in the presence of the sub-inspector of Police and dozens of Police constables kept standing there. Each individual received scores of *lathis*. Ten were wounded. As a result of a push, a woman had a miscarriage at Turkajni. The wonder is that all this is happening while the government has been maintaining a profound silence. Perhaps the poor are being tested.

Condition of the Crop

The Panchayat gave its verdict that the crop standing on the disputed land should be harvested under the supervision of government. The work began under the direct supervision of the sub-divisional officer. The kisans were compelled to keep themselves quite aloof. These poor men were not even engaged as labourers. The zamindars looted the crop while being harvested. We challenge government to publish a list of the bundles. That will explain what happened at the Tal. There is the reign of the Constables. While thousands of bundles of the zamindars could be removed, the Constables are demonstrating their promptness in the case of the kisan raiyats only when they intend removing a single bundle of the crop. In this way the kisans have not in their possession even enough for a single meal. The government has been pretending that the bundles are under attachment. Now it has been decided that there should be threshing of the crop under the supervision of the government. The kisans have now realized that this measure is meant to cause the death of the kisans by starvation and to crush the kisans' movement. The public has lost confidence and it cannot be regained unless government institutes an impartial enquiry into the conditions obtaining there.

Satyagraha and non-violence

We have been fighting for bread. If people cannot live without food, our fight then is for eternal truth. We challenge (all) to prove that the kisans of Tal were not cultivators. Now remains the question of non-violence. We do not claim to be non-violent; but even as a matter of policy, we have only resorted to non-violence so far. We have not taken up *lathis* even when *lathis* were hurled on hundreds of us. The oppressions perpetrated on us by the zamindars have increased only because we have taken a vow not to take up the lathi. Where are those today who abuse the Kisan Sabha for its violence? Let them see with their eyes open what is happening to the kisans.

On the 8th March a certain sum of money was distributed for food among the people of three villages, on behalf of government. Not more than Rs 2 was given per head. The kisans of nine villages numbering about 3,500 have been starving today. Their heads cattle are dying for want of fodder. They call again and again but who cares to listen to their cries—the cries of the hungry?

Choukidari Tax

The question of the realization of the Choukidari in this condition is just like the sprinkling of salt on the burns. The kisans have been able to save themselves so far by even selling their utensils. How are they to pay the Choukidari tax? We have been crying for bread and clothes, small children have been left with kinsmen and relatives. How is the choukidari tax to be paid?

Decision for Satyagraha

As against all these oppressions we have now decided to die. There would be a raid on government courts with effect from 2nd May. We shall peacefully stop government work—the government which cannot or did not try to save us from starvation. The three lines mentioned below will be our Geeta Mantra—(1) We shall bid adieu to this sinful and tyrannical world, receiving bullet shots; (2) We shall solve our bread problem for sometime by going to jail and (3) We shall return home after taking food and clothes from government. After this, the problem of land and crop will be solved.

Karjanand Sharma
Secretary, District Kisan Sabha, Monghyr

¹ This Hindi leaflet was published by Pandit Karjanand Sharma, Secretary, Monghyr District Kisan Sabha. He had declared his intention to launch a vigorous form of Satyagraha in connection with Barahiya Tal affairs from 2 May 1939 and to put a stop to all activities of the law courts until the government found ways of mitigating the miseries of the kisans. Karjanand also declared the intention of the satyagrahis not to always swear by non-violence. They were asked to either court imprisonment or die facing bullets.

63. Agrarian Reform

V.K.R.V. Rao¹ speaks on agrarian reform at Poona, *Bombay Chronicle*, 11 May 1939

Poona
8 May 1939

'The problem of agrarian reform in India is the problem of removing the poverty of the Indian peasant by increasing the agricultural income,' said Prof. V.K.R.V. Rao speaking on 'agrarian reform in India' in the Spring Lecture Series at the Tilak Mandir this evening. Mr A.R. Bhat was in the chair.

Grave inefficiency in agriculture was the cause of low income in agriculture, stated Rao. He did not suggest that the Indian peasant was either lazy or that he had no aptitude for agriculture but there were various factors which were responsible for the backwardness of agriculture in India. One of these was that the unit of the business of agriculture was uneconomic. The holdings were very small and did not yield enough to maintain the family of the farmer.

The landlord was conspicuous by not performing the legitimate function which he was expected to do as the owner of the land. He should be the leader in all undertakings for the improvement of land but he regarded the land as a means for rental income.

Prof. Rao paid a tribute to the Government of Bombay for the efforts they were making by way of introducing measures like the Debt, Redemption Bill which, he said, were full of potentialities for improving the condition of the agriculturists.

He also suggested that co-operative farming and making more capital available for the agriculturist were also measures which India could adopt profitably. The agriculturist was also

entitled to a minimum income and Government should plan for an increase in the prices of agricultural produce, so that he would share the national wealth.

¹ Professor V.K.R.V. Rao (Vijendra Kasturi Ranga Varadaraja Rao) (1908–91), Economist, educationist, writer and a former minister; he was born at Kanchipuram, Tamil Nadu and was educated at Bombay and Cambridge. He was Principal and Professor of Economics, L.D. Arts College, Ahmedabad, 1937–42; Founder-Director of Delhi School of Economics, 1948–57, Vice-Chancellor, Delhi University, 1959–60; Founder-Director of Institute for Social and Economic Change, Bangalore, and Institute of Economic Growth, Delhi; member, Planning Commission, 1963–66, and Lok Sabha, 1967–77; Minister for Shipping and Transport, 1967–69, Education and Youth Services, 1969–71. Government of India; His publication include: *Taxation of Income in India*, *The Nehru Legacy*, *Swami Vivekananda* and *India's National Income*. He is also commemorated by the V.K.R.V. Rao prizes in Social Science Research.

64. *Bakasht* Land Struggle: Reora, Barahiya Tal

Indulal Yajnik, *National Front*, 14 May 1939

Reora and Barahiya Tal were on my brain when I entrained for Gaya to attend the annual session of the Kisan Sabha.

One should have liked to visit all the battlefields on which the new land struggles were being fought in Bihar. But the brilliant victory at Reora and the epic struggle in the Tal area had resounded to the furthest ends of India.

Luckily during the Subjects Committee meeting, Swami Sahajanand introduced me to Pandit Karyanand Sharma of Barahiya Tal who offered to take us to his front. We could also visit Reora on the way. Accordingly, Comrades Bukhari, Abdulla Rasul and I, accompanied by Doctor Radha Krishan (who was severely wounded recently by zamindari goondas) left rather late for Reora on April 2nd (the day after the session was over) and reached the village at about 2 in the night.

The kisans of this and other villages had waited long for our party. They had dispersed and gone to sleep when our motor horn rent the quiet air of the village. Presently the kisans hurried to our car and escorted us to their huts.

'Thus is—was—(Pandit Jadunandan) Sharmaji's hut' said the enthusiastic doctor, turning his torchlight on a small two-side straw structure in which one could hardly stand, 'This is where he rested at night when he directed the campaign.'

We passed on to a clean court yard and were soon seated on string cots and surrounded by leading kisans. Almost straightway they began to unburden themselves:

'Our lot has been miserable. Our zamindar Babu Rameshwar Prasad Sinha swept away almost all we produced in our farm. What remained—was again subjected to all kinds of fines and imposts. We had to use plenty of wild roots and vegetation to supplement our scanty corn to keep body and soul together.'

'These extortions were never testified by receipts. So the Zamindar sued us for non-payment of rent and the obliging court passed eviction decrees against us. Still we firmly kept to our *Bakasht* lands and carried on a precarious struggle against the zamindar, his Amlas and outside tenants. Daylight robbery and goonda Raj however continued their sway and brought us to the abyss of starvation.'

'Do you know', continued the kisan in tragic tones, 'that the agonies of starvation drove us to the shame of selling our daughters to old men? This rendered us notorious in the whole Gaya district and the sight of our childless, young widowed daughters fills our hearts with anguish.'

We felt the atmosphere suffocating and surcharged with the grim realities of Bihar.

'Nay more,' said the kisans raising their voices in keen anger, 'our zamindar extorted a lion's share even from the sale-price of our daughters. Thus even our shame brought us little relief.'

I asked them about their cows and buffaloes. 'Ah that is another story,' said the kisans. 'Our zamindar and his lathials often raid our houses for milk and butter. When once we pleaded scarcity our zamindar savagely ordered his men to milk our wives and daughters.'

At this we were speechless.

'We suffered all this for years till we could suffer no more,' said a fiery old man, straight and stiff as a ramrod. 'The message of the Kisan Sabha had reached us and we requested Sharmaji to help us. He asked us to muster courage and unity, before he could aid us. His words sank deep in our minds.'

'A couple of years back we recovered possession of some hundred bighas of our land from the grip of outside kisans. The Bakasht struggle was being waged at Sanda and other places in our district. Enraged at the growth of the Kisan Movement our zamindar determined to give over one of our kisan's lands to his Amla. The whole village rose in revolt. At this he decided to oust us all from our lands and the present struggle began.'

'We again approached Sharmaji. We assured him that we were prepared to face assaults, firing, jail and even death to recover full rights in our lands. Convinced of our firm resolve Sharmaji settled down in our village and led us to victory.'

The story of the grim struggle has been widely reported. But I was lucky to get some interesting details from Sharmaji himself on my return to Gaya:

When I went to Reora I found that section 144 had been proclaimed prohibiting kisans from cutting their ripe maize crops while their bodies were aching with hunger. I asked them if anybody consumed the standing maize.

"Pigs, jackals and rats nibble away in the night" replied the kisans.

"Then why don't you eat the stuff likewise to satisfy your hunger?" I queried.

'At this the kisans were electrified. They cut the crop and began to eat. And the zamindars as well as the officials were too stupefied to take any action.

Negotiations were then started by the leaders of the District Congress Committee with the zamindar. But he refused to concede anything.

Similarly we harvested some rice and sugar-cane when these were ready. I got good money for sugar-cane from a sugar factory.

Then came the time for winter sowing. The peasants felt nervous. I asked them if they would follow me if I took the field first. They assented. So I started off with a plough and bullocks and began sowing. Presently all kisans came out, including women. Planting a red flag on every plough and shouting "Inquilab Zindabad", "Kisan Sabha ki Jai", they began to sow wheat, grain, peas, etc.

Next day the Police Jamadar announced by beat of drum that all lands were attached under Section 145. Undaunted by this new proclamation, about 100 kisans again took the field next day and continued their sowing operations.

I conveyed all this to the Collector and added that kisans could not starve themselves to obey his orders and that he should grant full maintenance charges to prevent them from approaching their farms.

When I returned to Reora after a short absence, I found that the kisans had been served with notices under Section 107 and that armed Gurkha police had been stationed there. To meet this critical situation I took a band of kisan volunteers from Niyamatpur Ashram to Reora.

A truce was then called at the instance of some friends who wanted time to settle the dispute. I insisted on the withdrawal of notices under Section 107 and of the Gurkha police. This was done. The truce was announced at a mammoth meeting when thousands of kisans offered to join the struggle. The joy and courage of Reora kisans knew no bounds.

Meanwhile we did not rest on our cars. We continued to train our volunteers and educate the kisans. We prepared for all emergencies and fixed a meeting on 21st November (1938) to listen to Swami Sahajanandji.

Apparently all this proved too much for the officials. My companions and I were served with orders under Section 144 prohibiting us from entering Reora and the whole Police Thana. In reply I wrote to the Police Chief that we would not leave the area and that we would begin to reap the new crops next day.

No wonder lorry-loads of police and revenue officers and men poured into the village as the kisans were cutting crops shouting "We break 144", "Police is our servant", "We are not afraid or jail", etc. The officials asked kisans to respect the law. To which the kisans replied that they would never leave the lands in their possession. The officials again asked for truce which was agreed to.

On 21st November Swamiji addressed a meeting of some 20,000 kisans. He exhorted them to carry on their fight peacefully. Swamiji was so glad to see how some policemen's trick to chase away women from the wells in the farms was foiled by their amazing courage and solidarity.

Before a month had passed, a fresh attack was launched by the Government. About 500 notices were served on kisans under the hateful Section 145. At this the kisans waited on the Collector at Gaya and presented their demands for the possession of their lands. But the Collector insisted on the payment of some fines before they could be given legal possession. The kisans finally pleaded their inability to pay anything. Later I saw the Collector. But all negotiations broke down on this crucial point.

On returning to Reora I convened a meeting of our Kisan Panchayat at which it was decided to resume Satyagraha on 16th December. Next day kisans began to reap the crops. Within a few days a lot of corn was garnered by the kisans.

On 21st evening I was shocked to see motor lorries rolling into the village carrying Gurkha police armed with rifles and bayonets. High officials accompanied them. They were camped on one side of the village while our red-shirt volunteers took training on the other side.

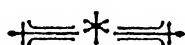
"The stage was indeed set for an epic struggle. But the kisans and their women folk were undaunted. The Panchayat met and fixed up a detailed programme. The women were asked to exhort the police to think of their farms, their mothers and sisters and desist from hostile action. The men were to continue their harvesting in the fields." Such was his story.

Luckily nothing untoward happened. Sharmaji, some of his co-workers and a few kisans were arrested within a week. The trial of Sharmaji was attended by unforgettable scenes that will be inscribed in the pages of history.

Before we went to Tripuri we heard of the settlement effected with Sharmaji in jail. Accordingly about 1000 bighas were unconditionally restored to the kisans leaving a couple of hundred to the zamindar. Sharmaji and the kisans were released a few days later. The Kisan victory was complete.

'Who will till the bighas given to the zamindar?' I asked Sharmaji, before leaving him.

'Why, of course our kisans' replied Sharmaji with a twinkle in his eye. 'Not at once perhaps—but by and by.'



65. Congress policy criticized

Karad Taluqa's Political Conference held at Kala, *Times of India*, May 1939

Karad
17 May 1939

More than 5,000 kisans attended the third session of the Karad Taluka Political Conference at Kala yesterday under the presidentship of Mr P.S. Sane, of Amalner. Messrs P.K. Shiralkar and A.N. Patil, members of the Assembly, and Congress leaders of the Radical group of the Satara district, were present.

Mr Sane, in his presidential address, said that the Congress by holding its sessions in villages had aroused the kisans from their slumber. They had been acquainted with their rights, and their confidence in the Congress had thus been secured. The Congress Ministers had not, however, followed the programme announced in the Congress manifesto issued before the elections. It had recently been discovered that there was no unity in the Congress. The Bombay Government had not yet thought it proper to lift the ban on Communists, while some other Governments had lifted it. The Government had not reduced the enhanced land assessment, even though the rates of agricultural produce had been lowered. Mr Sane, in conclusion, asked the kisans assembled there to organize Congress volunteer corps and establish Congress Committees in every village.

The conference passed several resolutions, one of which stated that, in view of the critical situation caused by the resignation of Mr Subhas Chandra Bose from the Congress presidentship, there was urgent need of revising the national attitude in general, instead of worshipping Mr Gandhi. The resolution added that the Congress 'high command' did not command the people's approval as it had not taken the Leftwingers into confidence when it reconstituted the former Working Committee.

66. Kisan Procession in Mandvi

Extract from weekly confidential report of District Magistrate, Surat, File No. 800(53) BIV, 1939, Home Deptt. (Spl.) Government of Bombay, Maharashtra State Archives

18 May 1939

Mr Indulal Yajnik and Pangarkar organized a procession of Kisans on 11 May 1939 at Mandvi to welcome back the kisans who had gone to jail over the movement. The procession was about 100 strong and marched to the Mamlatdar's Kacheri. There they made inquiries regarding notices served on some of the kisans. At Amba-Pardi Mr Pangarkar is reported to have recorded the statements of kisans to the effect that the parsis and sawkars had spread a rumour that all the kisan prisoners had died in the jail, that sawkars forcibly removed corn from the huts of kisans and that the fines inflicted on the kisans were recovered by force from their women-folk.

A public meeting of peasants was held at Rohma in Pardi Mahal on 13 May 1939 under the auspices of the Kisan Sabha. The strength of the meeting was about 100. Fifty peasants about from the neighbouring 12 villages attended the meeting. Mr Indulal Yajnik, Thakorlal Patel of Bulsar and others addressed the meeting. They said that in the whole of Pardi Taluka the sawkars oppress and harass kisans in innumerable ways. They want the peasants to be in perpetual slavery. It is to prevent the peasants from falling victims to the wiles of the sawkars and landlords that the kisan movement has been started in the Taluka. The Congress is no doubt fighting for achieving the independence of India, but as it represents all classes, it cannot make a speciality of the cause of kisans. It is, therefore, felt that there should be started an organisation for safeguarding their rights

and interests. The taluka Congress Committees are afraid of the kisans and kisan leaders, because the Congressites have the mentality of capitalists. They want to help the capitalists at the expense of the peasantry. The Congress Ministers are not working for bettering the condition of the peasantry. The Congress leaders are seen enjoying feasts at the places of sawkars and landlords and as such they cannot be expected to do any good to the tenants. The peasants were also advised not to give up possession of their lands and not to be afraid of sawkars, Pathans or Bhaiyas. For establishing the kisan movement on a sound basis, there should be kisan village and taluka Committees and for the formation of such committees, the kisans should contribute either in kind or cash to the extent their means permit.

67. Report on the political events in Bihar for the first half of May 1939

Hallet Papers, Acc. No. 3948, NAI

Patna
22 May 1939

The principal political event of the fortnight was the Gandhi Sewa Sangh Conference at Brindaban in Champaran district from the 3rd to 8th May 1939. The attendance at the beginning was disappointingly small but this was due to a leaflet circulated over the fictitious signature of Pandit Prajapati warning intending visitors against plague. Later on in the week, however, the attendance was about 25,000. From the large crowds that assembled from day to day to have a *darshan* of Mahatma Gandhi it was clear that his influence had in no degree waned. The Conference was attended by many orthodox Congress leaders such as Sardar Patel, Mr Bhulabhai Desai, Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan and Dr Rajendra Prasad. The public proceedings have been reported in the press but there were also meetings in camera the result of which has not been published. The elections to the district board have been in progress throughout the period and are still going on. There have been very large Congress victories but in Kolhan and parts of Ranchi where the aboriginals predominate, the Adibasis had a majority; in the latter district they captured 15 out of the 24 elected seats and in the Kolham 11 out of 14 seats. In Gaya district the Kisan Sabha have been victorious in the Nawadah and Sadr sub-divisions. The Muslim League has boycotted the elections generally throughout the province, but in Chota Nagpur there has been considerable Muslim support from the Adibasis. The Adibasi Sabha has declared the Mohammedans to be Adibasis which shows that it is a movement whose object is to gather all the forces against the Congress rather than to consolidate the aboriginals. There has been a certain amount of disorder and minor riots were reported from Silac (Patna), Sultanganj and Shah Kund (Bhagalpur), more serious disturbances at Makhdumpur and Kurtha (Gaya) and minor election scuffles at Lohardaga, Kuru, Ranchi and Basia (Ranchi district) and from Dhanbad and Singhbhum. Feelings in Ranchi ran high and in some places the parties had collected stocks of *lathis* which the police were able to seize in time. The trouble was possibly accentuated by the distribution of rather provocative leaflets, though by action the Adibasis were mainly aggressive in Ranchi, Kuru and Basia. The elections in the province will not be completed until the end of the month.

The wave of trouble in schools continues to grow. Flag incidents are reported from Tilauthu H.E. School (Shahabad), Pupri N.E. School and Mukharji Seminary (Muzaffarpur) and Gorgi N.E. School (Monghyr); while the 'Bande Mataram' dispute at the Gaya Zila School still continues. There has been a large crop of school strike at Khagaria (Monghyr), Ranchi, Kodarma (Hazaribagh), Bhagalpur, Sursand (Muzaffarpur) and threatened strikes at Masaurhi (Patna) and Nawadah (Gaya). The indiscipline in schools is gradually becoming general. In the circumstances the advice of

Mr Kripalani at Brindaban that he would judge the patriotism of students not by their flying the national flag and singing of 'Bande Mataram' but by their doing constructive work, which was welcome.

There has been a fresh outbreak of communal violence in Gaya. Feelings remained strained after the riots at the end of January 1939, and fresh impetus appears to have been given by the recrudescence of trouble over the 'Bande Mataram' song at the High School and the series of Muslim League meetings which were held during the first four days of May. Ghazi Muhammad Dharampal who has been touring in various parts of Patna Division during the last month appeared at Gaya for the 'Prophet Day' celebrations on 3 May 1939, and delivered rather communal speeches. This was preceded by a large number of meetings both in Gaya town and the vicinity. Ghazi Dharampal meetings on 3, 4 and 5 May were attended by audiences of over 2,000. There has also been a great deal of provocative talk in the town. The difficulty about the Muslim League speeches is that those that are highly communal and provocative are generally delivered in the mosques where shorthand police reporters are not allowed and where even their presence as spectators is resented. Rioting suddenly broke out in the afternoon of the 6 May at about 5 p.m. The immediate cause was a very trifling incident. A Mohammedan in the course of a quarrel with his wife threw a pot of boiling beef out of the window. A portion of the food struck a small Hindu girl who was playing in the street causing slight burns. Her cries attracted a crowd and within a short time exaggerated reports of an attack on a Hindu girl led to rioting in a number of different Mohallas... The total casualties were 14 dead of whom 12 were Mohammedans, one Hindu and one was unidentified, and 124 injured of whom 81 were Mohammedans and 43 Hindus...

Another serious riot took place at village Kanshi near Darbhanga on the 7 May 1939. This again arose from a petty incident in which a Hindu girl who was keeping watch on a mango grove was assaulted by some Mohammedans who came up to pick the fallen fruit. A riot followed in the village in which there was house to house fighting and looting. One Hindu and one Mohammedan were killed and 11 Hindus and 16 Mohammedans were injured...

The latest development in the Barahiya thana agitation has been dispatch of *jathas* of kisans to Monghyr to perform Satyagraha. This was heralded by a leaflet announcing that the satyagrahis would bring to a standstill the working of the courts. Successive batches were sent from Barahiya to Monghyr on the 1st, 2nd and 4th of May 1939. The demonstrators boarded the trains by force and on arrival at Monghyr the first party attempted to rush the Fort gate. It became necessary to concentrate about 200 constables at Kiul, Jamalpur and Luckeserai to deal with the organized train jumping. After the second batch no further parties succeeded in boarding the trains. Attempts were then made to reach Monghyr by road which were also stopped. On the 2nd and 3rd Satyagrahis at Monghyr endeavoured to hold up the trains by lying on the line and the leaders including Karjanand Sharma, Lachmi Prashad and Anil Mitter were arrested and taken away to Bhagalpur while a large number of demonstrators were taken in lorries and turned out at Sikandara about 40 miles away. On the 5th Swami Sahajananda appeared and after some discussion called off the demonstration which is generally considered to be a last effort on the part of Karjananda to save his face, as he expects that the findings of the Arbitration Committee will disappoint the hopes which he has held out to the Kisans so long. Swami Sahajanand expressed his disapproval of the Satyagraha which had been organised without any notice to or approval of the Provincial Kisan Sabha.

At Muriar (Shahabad) attempts by the Commissioner and the District Magistrate to effect a settlement failed. On 23 April 1939, the Kisans attempted to cut the crops and a clash with the zamindar's party was narrowly prevented. The District Magistrate, therefore, ordered all the crops to be cut by the police. Since then there has been no further development. At Reora there is a stalemate as the Bhumihar tenants will not accept Jadunandan Sharma's Socialist distribution of

the land in equal shares to the raiyats whether of high or low castes. In Champaran there has been a riot to Rani-Pakri over a Bakasht dispute which is likely to develop into more serious agitation. A mob of about 100 tenants armed with *lathis* attacked and tried to demolish the zamindar's *kutchery* and more serious developments were prevented by the prompt arrival of the sub-divisional officer and the police. At Dhanauli (Darbhanga) the Kisans are reported to have divided the Bakasht land of their *malik* between themselves without any opposition from the *maliks*. In Sherghati police station some of the Gaya socialist groups are attempting to prepare Satyagraha against the local zamindar. Apart from these incidents there has been little general activity among the Kisan party owing to the District Board elections. Swami Sahajanand paid a visit to Jamshedpur at the end of April where he addressed a labour gathering in pursuit of his policy of a united front.

Pandit Rahul Sankritayana who was convicted in connection with the so-called Satyagraha at Amwari has given considerable trouble in jail. He went on a hunger-strike in order to force Government to give privileged treatment to Kisan prisoners. His demands were such as Government could not accept, but they have made a distinction between prisoners who have been actuated by political motives and those who were agitating in pursuance of their own interest and all reasonable privileges have been allowed to the former class. Pandit Sankritayana, however, would not moderate his demands and continued his hunger strike till the 11th May when he was released.

The proceedings under section 145, CrPC in the Amwari dispute have terminated in favour of the landlords and satyagraha still continues. The strike at the Barari Coke Plant at Dhanbad was called off on 1 May 1939 and the points at issue referred to the arbitration of the Additional Deputy Commissioner. The dispute of the Tata Iron Foundry has been settled by the Labour Commissioner. At Pakaur there was a short strike in one of the local lac factories. Trouble is reported to be brewing again in the Rohtas Industries Limited, where Basawan Singh is busy. The situation at Musaboni has got distinctly worse during the last week. For some time there has been acute friction between the Labour Union and Home's Federation, and also dissensions between Madras labour and local labour. On 25 April 1939 the steam pressure in the boiler house at the Moubhandar works was deliberately reduced by the men and the power plant both at the mines and the factory failed. As a result of this the company refused to pay wages for the day that was lost and this has accentuated discontent. On 8 May 1939 there was a minor clash between the Company's watchmen and workers at the pay distribution. On 9 May 1939 the dead body of the Santal worker was discovered in the works and the Company was immediately accused of having caused the death. Investigation, however, suggest that he was murdered in a private quarrel. On the following day one of the European Engineers and on the same day another European Engineer was assaulted. The feeling at the works is extremely bad but matters are quiet at the moment as the Labour Commissioner has arrived on the scene to investigate disputes. There are threats of a strike at the Giridih State Railway Collieries where Dr Satyanarayan Singh is creating a good deal of trouble. He is at present being prosecuted for his followers and seizing some of the Congress records.

68. Kher's tribute to Kanara peasants' sacrifices

Bombay Chronicle, 27 May 1939

Belgaum
26 May 1939

'I have had a very useful tour in Kanara district. I was very glad to have had an opportunity of remaining present on the occasion of the festivity of Ankola and Siddapur ryots, on the restoration

of their forfeited lands. I saw, for the first time, how a very large number of farmers, men and women, fearlessly participated in the struggle for freedom and cheerfully sacrificed all their worldly belongings. In Siddapur alone over 500 men and 85 women courted imprisonment, 50 per cent land revenue was withheld and lands of the value of over a lakh and a quarter of rupees had been sold for the recovery of about Rs 10,000.

The residents of Karwar District are staunch followers of Mahatma Gandhi and next to Gujarat. Karwar District made the largest sacrifice in the course of last Satyagraha. I was, therefore, very happy to be in the midst of such people. The poverty is appalling, but the farmers are very industrious and hospitable. I came to know their grievances at first hand I hope to give them some relief. I had a most instructive and useful tour, in this beautiful district, poor in wealth, but rich in beautiful scenery and devotion to the country's cause.'

69. Kisans' Cry for Bread

Congress Socialist, 28 May 1939

Siwan
17 May 1939

About five hundred Kisans, including two hundred women, set out on a historic hunger march this morning for Siwan situated at a distance of fourteen miles from Amwari. All through the way they kept on crying: 'Give us bread or give us jail' along with other Kisans slogans. The marchers met Swami Sahajanand, Pt Jadunandan Sharma and Shree Bankey Bihari on their way to Siwan where they reached at about 11 a.m. Meanwhile a series of Kisan batches from different villages of the sub-division joined them till 5 in the evening when all combined moved out in a tremendously huge procession of about fifteen thousand, headed, of course, by Amwari women who were all clad as reds. The very sight of them was supremely touching but inspiring and at once forced tears into the eyes of many. The procession culminated in a large public meeting presided over by Babu Kapildeo Narain, pleader.

The proceedings began with kisan songs sung by women themselves. The following persons then addressed the audience who were mainly Kisans:

Rahul Sankrityayan: He had grown weak owing to his recent hunger strike and therefore expressed his inability to speak much. He said that the Kisans and Muzdoors, being actual producers of grains and commodities, must first enjoy the fruits of their labour, not that the landed aristocracy should grow fat at the cost of the toilers. The Amwari Satyagraha, he then pointed out, was only a part of the struggle of the peasants and workers of the world.

Swami Sahajanand Saraswati spoke for more than an hour and the audience heard him with rapt attention all through. During the course of his speech he deplored the malicious design of the local S.D.O. who had been actively instrumental in putting down the prestige of the Congress and the present Ministry in so far as he maltreats the Kisan workers and intentionally involves them under charges of theft, particularly when Sec. 145 CrPC is under operation. He strongly denounced the recent Government communiqué issued in connection with Rahulji's fast in the Chupra Jail and then pointed out how the Bihar Ministry shamelessly stifled the kisan cause by entering into pacts with those who had left no stone unturned to wreck the honour of the Congress during the last Assembly elections. It was really a bolt from the blue. He was not very hopeful about the success in purging the Congress of numerous evil influences because to offend and judge, he said, were two distinct offices, and it was a curious phenomenon that those who were themselves offenders were entrusted with the responsibility of purging the Congress of offenders, with the result that

really noble and faithful workers in the cause of national liberation are elbowed out and those who are actual culprits are found at the head of Congress organisations controlling the ring itself. The purpose of the Kisan Sabha is therefore to put the right thing in the right place and thus save this great national institution from topsy-turvidom.

Shree Bankey Bihari then moved three resolutions which are summarised as follows:

(1) This meeting of the Kisans of the Siwan Sub-division offers its hearty congratulation upon Rahulji's selfless services toward the oppressed and starving Kisan of Amwari.

(2) In the opinion of this meeting the recent Government communiqué issued in connection with Rahulji's fast in the Chupra Jail was extremely deplorable and as such must be condemned outright. The Government was asked to withdraw it and satisfy the demands of the Kisan political prisoners.

(3) The meeting appealed to the Government for a speedy intercession in solving the agrarian tangle of Amwari, otherwise the whole responsibility would have to be shared by the Ministry alone.

These resolutions were unanimously passed. The meeting dispersed at about 9 p.m. The marked service and sympathy of the Siwan people in relation to these oppressed Kisans were highly commendable.

Next morning when the Kisans began to march back to Amwari, the police came to arrest their leader Brahmachari Rambriksha whom the Kisan women surrounded on all sides and would not let the police take him to the jail. They all burst into tears when Brahmachariji appealed to them for enabling the police to arrest him. He was then taken to the courts amidst great excitement. All the Satyagrahis kept fast throughout the whole day and maintained perfect peace inspite of continued provocation from the other side. In the evening of the 18th they marched back to Amwari according to Rahulji's instructions.

70. Zamindars versus Kisans

Amrita Bazar Patrika, 31 May 1939

31 May 1939

As a sequel to firing by Zamindars on Jagdishpur Kisans two counter cases under the same sections are going on in the Court of the Sub-divisional Magistrate, Sadar, Darbhanga—one against the Zamindar and the other against the Kisans. In both the cases the Kisans made a petition before the trying Magistrate requesting him to postpone the hearing of both the cases as they were moving the District Magistrate to transfer the cases to the Court of some other Magistrate on the demand that the Sub-divisional Magistrate was pro-zamindars and anti-kisan, that in all the agrarian disputes he had acted against the Kisans and in favour of the Zamindars, that in the present cases in which the Zamindars had fired on the Kisans the Zamindars had been allowed bail of Rs 250 each while the bails ranging from Rs 500 to Rs 1,000 were demanded from the Kisans and that the attitude of the Court was such as he made it quite clear that the Kisans would not get justice.

The Sub-divisional Magistrate postponed the hearing of the case against the Kisans while he did not postpone the case in which the Zamindars are accused wherefrom the Kisans who were witnesses in the case refused to answer any question put by the court with remark that as they did not expect any justice from the Magistrate, it was useless saying anything.

Both yesterday and today the Kisans came out of the Court with their usual slogans 'Inqulab Zindabad', 'Down with Zamindari System', 'Down with Raj', etc. Only they carried it on peacefully and non-violently. They should not fear a declaration of lock-out by the mill-owners.

Proceeding, the speaker referred to the police repression and added, 'This sort of thing is being done by the very police whom the Prime Minister of Bihar has termed as the servants of God and whose honour he has declared to be his honour. It is indeed very regrettable. It must be unequivocally condemned.'

'There is Section 144 against Shree Benipuri, President, Patna City Mazdoor Union and seven others. A ban is placed against those who work for the welfare of the exploited and they who exploit are left free. More properly the act should be enforced against these, the mill-owners. But why should anything like that be done? The Government is theirs.'

Swamiji sounded a note of warning to the ministers and said, 'If the highhandedness of the authorities is allowed to prevail in the Congress regime as is being seen daily everywhere and more so in the case of Bihariji Mills strike at present, it would set a very bad example. The Britishers would take advantage of it when it would come to a fight between them and the Congress. It is for that day that they are clearing their way from now on.'

Summarising, he said, 'Whatever that may be and whether the ministers heed the danger ahead or not, no matter they pay attention to the grievances of the labourers or not though they ought to pay as their votes have placed them in those positions and not that of the mill-owners, you go on with your strike undaunted. You require money I know. For this appeal to the public to help you in all possible ways. Let every shop-keeper and every wage-earner and he who can afford contribute to your fund a part of their earning.'

You organize a procession and see your Prime Minister and acquaint him with your demands and bring upon him the necessity of meeting them.

And you don't limit your fight to Patna alone. You extend it all over the province and attack your enemies on all fronts; on the mill, on shops and everywhere.'

Swamiji concluded, 'And in this way let the strike go on peacefully in the Bihariji Mills as long as you are not victorious. Take courage in your hands and onward with your struggle. Have the necessary grit and tenacity and you will triumph. No power on earth can defeat you. Labourers, your power is invincible.'

Sardar Balvant Singh also of the Ambari Satyagraha spoke. He recounted the troubles the political prisoners have to undergo in this Congress Government.

Shree Jogendra Sukla exhorted the strikers to work and not simply to talk and hear as work alone could bring them nearer to their goal. In the end Shree Rambriksha Benipuri, President, Patna City Mazdoor Union, summed up the proceedings and outlined the future programme. He condemned the lathi charges made by the police and said if this is law and order, it is better that law and order should go. He made a fervent appeal to the public to help the strikers financially.

The meeting terminated amidst cries of 'Inqalab Zindabad', 'Mazdoor Raj Qayam Ho', 'Kamanewala Khaiga-Iskilia jo kuchh Ho.'

71. Punjab District Kisan Committee decides on Satyagraha

Hindustan Times, 1 June 1939

Jullundur
30 May 1939

The District Kisan Committee will send the third jatha of 25 kisans to Lahore on the 1st proximo to offer Satyagraha in the Kisan Morcha under the direction of the Provincial Kisan Committee. The Jatha will start from Chima Kalan and travel on foot, halting at various places enroute to address meetings with a view to ventilate the Kisans' grievances against the so-called Zamindars

Ministry of the Punjab and enlist support of the people for the Morcha. Hundreds of peasants of this district have placed their services at the disposal of the district Kisan Committee to proceed to Lahore at any time when called upon by the Provincial Kisan Committee.

Master Mota Singh Anandpuri, a prominent Socialist leader, has received a letter from Mr K.F. Nariman¹ of Bombay inviting his co-operation and support for the All-India Forward Bloc Radical Conference to be held at Bombay next month, a few days before the AICC's meeting. The letter states that Mr Subhas Chandra Bose and other leaders have approved of the idea of calling the conference with the object of discussing measures for organizing centers of the Forward Bloc in various provinces and also to formulate a definite policy, programme and line of action for the future. Master Mota Singh has been requested to get in touch with radical elements with a view to enlisting their support for the conference. He has accordingly started canvassing propaganda to enlist delegates for the above conference.

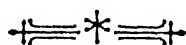
¹ Nariman, Khurshed Framji (1863-1948); born at Thana in a middle class Parsi family; passed his B.A. from Deccan College, Poona, LL.B from Bombay and established a flourishing law practice; later fought and won case against Raja of Indore called as 'Bowla Murder case'. Since 1924, for fifteen years, he was elected to Bombay Corporation and was the mayor in 1935-36; for several years, he was president of Bombay Congress Committee, AICC and Working Committee; was also the president of Bombay Youth League and Bombay Students Federation. He was elected a member of the Bombay Governor's Council and boycotted the council during non-cooperation movement. Though he did not agree with Gandhiji totally, he gave heart and soul to national movement; arrested during Salt Satyagraha in Bombay and released in 1932; he was elected to Bombay Legislative Council by maximum votes on the ticket of Congress Swaraj Party, he was leader of the opposition and attacked the Government of Bombay for its misdeeds and the government had great difficulty in replying to his attacks. In 1937, he came in conflict with Sardar Patel as he was asked to contest against Cawasji Jehangir which he refused; although he was elected to Bombay Assembly on a Congress ticket, he was not included in the Kher ministry and his speeches thereafter were critical of the Congress Government. He, thereafter, joined the legal defence of Azad Hind Army men both at Delhi and in Malaya; his last years were passed in obscurity. He published his book *Whither Congress?* after his jail terms in 1932.

72. Kangra Peasants' Conference

Hindustan Times, 4 June 1939

Kangra
1 June 1939

A conference of the Congress workers of the Kangra Valley rural areas was held recently at Dharamsala, in Kotwali Bazar under the presidency of Dr Saifuddin Kitchlew, President, Punjab Provincial Congress Committee. Several rural Congress Committee workers from the remotest parts of the district attend the conference. Pandit Bhagat Ram, MLA, President, DCC, in opening the conference, dwelt up on the pitiable condition of the vast residents of Kangra and requested the President, PCC, to help the DCC in spreading the Congress message to the people of this backward district. L. Hem Rad Sud, President, City Congress Committee, Kangra, in delivering his address, observed that the poor inhabitants of the Kangra valley were faced today with the problems of starvation, unemployment and illiteracy. He referred to the appalling poverty of the Kangra peasants and remarked that, so long as the Government revenue collecting system and money lending practice were not abolished there was no hope for the upliftment of the masses.



73. Summary report of the Agriculturists Conference
held at Naydongri on 5 June 1939

Resolutions of the Agriculturists Conference held at Naydongri, Weekly Confidential Report,
1939, Maharashtra State Archives

5 June 1939

R.U. Harkal recited a ballad explaining the miserable condition of the peasants and pointed out as to how they were being exploited by the zamindars and the *Sawkars*.

Mansaram Shahir of Hirapur Taluka, Chalisgaon, recited a ballad explaining the importance of Red flag and the Congress flag. He also said that it was necessary that both the flags should come together and the movement for Independence should be carried out unitedly. He also recited the ballad explaining the condition of the peasants. Dr Cangaram Banduji Bhutekar recited a ballad of *Inquilab Zindabad* and also a ballad explaining the importance of carrying out the movement, by peaceful means, to achieve Independence.

R.D. Bari, the Chairman of the reception committee, said that it was a fortunate day for them to get a President like S.G. Sardesai for the Conference. He asked the peasants to tell their grievances to the authorities concerned if they wanted to get them redressed. He requested the peasants to organise under the Congress flag and also requested them to become the members of the Congress. He welcomed the president...

K.R. Ambodekar introduced S.G. Sardesai to the audience, saying that he was the Congressman and was the prominent leader of the peasants and workers. He (Sardesai) had made a great movement at Sholapur, for getting the human rights for the 'Criminal' Tribes. He added that S.G. Sardesai was also jailed and that he had done a great sacrifice. He requested the audience to be attentive throughout the proceedings of the Conference.

D.K. Kasliwala said: 'This Conference is being held here as per the resolution passed by the Working Committee of the Taluka Congress Committee. The Working Committee had also decided to offer the presidentship of this Conference to Mr S.G. Sardesai. The leaflet published on the 3rd instant was nothing but a mischief played by some persons. They say that they are the Congressmen and so must know what is right and what is wrong. They said that they signed the first leaflet through misunderstanding. This cannot be believed. They knew that Sardesai was the member of the provincial as well as of the All-India Congress Committee. This Conference is being held here with a view to pass the resolutions beneficial to the peasants. The grievances of the peasants will not be redressed unless they try to place them before the proper persons. This Conference is not meant to oppose the Congress; but is being held here to discuss and pass the resolutions which may benefit the peasants. I hope you all will support the resolutions which will be moved in this Conference.'

S.G. Sardesai said: 'Peasant brethren, it is a general practice to thank the persons, at whose instance the Conference is held' but I am not going to follow that procedure, as I consider that, it is no good simply to waste time in observing the formalities when more important problems are awaiting discussions. I am too glad to stand before you today, because I had never any occasion to address a meeting of the peasants. I have been working for the workers for the last 8-10 years. I am well acquainted with the life of the workers. The workers are not required to face "zamindar shahi" (landlordism) and 'Sawkarshahi' (moneylenders). The problem about paying the land assessment is also not before them. Their grievances are about their low wages, increase in the working hours and want of suitable quarters etc. The zamindars and the capitalists are the enemies of the peasants and workers. The peasants and the workers should unite as they both have to fight

for bread. The workers are awakened. They come forward with the red flag as well as the Congress flag. They come forward to put down the capitalism. The peasants and the workers should work hand in hand in furtherance of their common object. The peasants have awakened recently, while the workers have been fighting for their grievances for the last 20 years. The Unions of the workers have been established. The monthly income of the Union is about 10 thousand rupees. The peasants used to collect only to discuss the problems concerning their caste disputes. They had no courage to speak a word against the landlords and the *sawkars*. The peasants have now come to know that they can put down the *sawkars*. The peasants were not poor from the beginning. But they have been made poor by the Zamindars and the capitalists, who are handful.

Since the Congress accepted offices, the peasants have become nervous, as the Congress could not do benefit to the satisfaction of the peasants. They were under the impression that their grievances would be redressed, without delay, in the Congress regime. They also thought that their harassment at the hands of Zamindars would come to an end. They hoped that there would be some decrease in the land assessment. But nothing of the sort took place after the Congress formed the Ministries. It is being told to the peasants, now-a-days, that they should not hold big meetings, they should not take out a big procession (a march) and also they should not speak against the Government and the *sawkars*. All this has made them nervous. The Congress is therefore being blamed. Formerly the Congress used to fight against the British Government. The Congressites had suffered much and also they had sacrificed much, but now the circumstances have been changed. Today, the movement is made to capture the Local Boards and the Assemblies. This attitude of the Congress is giving opportunity to the parties like the Hindu Mahasabha and the Muslim League to make propaganda against the Congress. The Congress is being attacked from all sides. The peasants should bear in mind that they will never be benefited if they remain aloof from the Congress. You will surely be able to achieve Independence, if you organise under the Congress banner and fight for it.

Some persons may come and tell you to join the communal bodies. But you should never join them. The attitude of the Congress leaders has been changed since forming the Ministries. Under the circumstances we should approach the Ministers, acquaint them with our grievances and should place our demands before them. The mill-workers in Bombay had gone on strike when the Police opened fire against them. It is our duty to go to the Congress leaders and request them to give up their present attitude. We should request the Congress Ministers to resign their posts and to come out. The peasants should assure them that they are behind them and that they would support them in the movement for Independence.

The strength of the Congress has been increased. There are about 35 lacs of members of the Congress today, while there were not more than 10 lacs of members before some years. The Native states' subjects are awakened and are ready to go to jail. The movement for achieving democracy is being carried out in the States. In Bihar about 10 lacs of peasants are the members of the Kisan Sabha. We should tell our leaders not to stop the movement. If the Ministers are unable to fulfill our demands, we should tell them that they should come out of the office.

If, however, the Collector or the DSP do not act according to their wishes, we will make them to act so. The other parties are trying to separate you from the Congress taking advantage of the weakness of the Congress Ministers. The question of bread will not be solved unless we achieve Independence. The District Congress Committee has passed a resolution banning the Taluka Congress Committees from holding Conferences and also ordered that no president for the Conference should be selected without previous consultation with the authorities of the District Congress Committee. The District Congress Committee has, in a way, issued orders under Section 144 CrPC on the Taluka Congress Committees. Sane Guruji and myself are said to be acting

against the principles of the Congress. How can I then remain as the member of the AICC? How am I allowed to sit with Messrs Jedhe and Gadgil, and discuss the redemption of Debt Bill? The educated people want only to benefit themselves. The capitalists want that they should be benefited after achieving Swaraj. They think that the number of their mills will increase. The peasants are the lives of the nation. The peasants and the workers are awakened under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. The Congress, now thinks, that the peasants are now unmanageable due to the awakening. The peasants want the Congress Ministers to carry out their promises in connection with reducing their debts, reducing the land assessment, giving them facility in the forests etc. The peasants will then only support the Congress. In the first place it will be our duty to remove the foreign power (rule). The great war is expected, which we do not want. The peasants should be well organized and they should also strengthen the Congress. We should tell our leaders that we, 25 crores of peasants, are ready to overthrow the foreign rule...'

74. Report of the political events in Bihar during
the second half of May 1939

Hallet Papers, Acc. No. 3948, NAI

Ranchi
8 June 1939

Apart from the excitements attendant on the district board elections, the fortnight has been a fairly quiet one. Generally speaking the elections have so far resulted in decisive Congress victories except in Ranchi, where, as I reported last week, the Adibasis were successful. The Muslim League boycott of the elections continues and in some places has been attended with violence but the Muslim candidates standing on Congress tickets have generally succeeded. At Ballia (Monghyr) attempts by Muslim League volunteers to prevent Muhammadans from voting led to an exchange of brick-bats in which several persons were injured. At Forbesganj (Purnea) Muhammadan voters were drummed out of the polling station and one man is reported to have been tarred and feathered. There has been a considerable amount of disorder particularly in Gaya, Muzaffarpur and Monghyr districts. In Gaya the armed police had to be called in at Ghosi as well as at Makdumpur and Kurtha to deal with the riots mentioned in my last report. At Jehanabad a ballot-box was set on fire. In Monghyr, there were disturbance at Begusarai and Bandwar and in the Muzaffarpur district parties of armed police had to be deputed to no less than eight polling stations, six of which were in the Sithamarhi sub-division. The majority of the elections are now completed.

2. The emergence of Gandhi Sewa Sangh as a right wing political party is now an accomplished fact. The position of the Forward Bloc is not so clear and the attitude of the local members of the left wing parties to it is still indefinite. It appears to be receiving support in some unexpected quarters. A newspaper report states that Jaipal Singh, the leader of the Adibasi movement, which has pitted itself against the Congress, has given it a modified blessing and describes it as 'a dim ray of hope on the political horizon'. He considers its existence 'essential to uphold the ideals of democracy.' The same leader is also dabbling in the formation of an Adibasi Labour Union to protect aboriginal workers in Industrial areas in Chota Nagpur against exploitation. One of the meetings of the Adibasi Labour Union which was presided over by a non-Adibasi, namely, Babu Radhika Prasad of the Dalbhum Raj family resolved to make further representations to the Bihar Government on the murder of a Santal labourer. Mr Jaipal Singh himself it is understood has presented his demands to Dr Rajendra Prasad, one of which is that one Minister and one Parliamentary Secretary should be aboriginals.

3. Two Muslim League Conferences were held in the Tirhut Division, viz., at Motihari from 15 to 17 May and at Muzaffarpur from 20 to the 22 May. Sir Reza Ali presided over the first supported by Maulvi Zafar Ali Khan and the Raja of Mahmudabad over the second. The speeches at both were fairly moderate on the whole except of Maulvi Zafar Ali Khan who spoke in his usual vigorous style. Indictment of the Congress government was the main theme at both Conferences coupled with condemnation of the so-called partiality of the Bihar Government towards Hindus in connection with the Gaya riots. Sir Reza Ali's advocacy of birth control gave some offence to the more conservative elements in his audience. The growth of communal feeling in Muzaffarpur which used to be fairly free from this evil, has been very noticeable recently and rumours of the possibility of communal disturbance during the Muslim League Conference there were so prevalent that the police emergency patrol scheme had to be put in force for the whole period of the Conference. At a recent Muslim League meeting at Purnea, it was decided that all Muslim children should be trained in the use of the *lathi*...

5. Owing to the summer holidays, disturbances in schools are dormant, but at Monghyr the Students' Federation is reported to be contemplating a general school strike to secure the release of two local Kisan leaders, Karjanand Sharma and Anil Mitra. At Pupri (Muzaffarpur) the flag dispute at the local school has aroused considerable communal feeling and has necessitated action under section 107, Criminal Procedure Code. The leaders of the Students' Federation Movement are making rather belated attempts to restore sanity among the students' population and at a Provincial meeting at Patna on the 19th Mr Naqi Imam and Maulvi Ali Ashraf, President and Secretary, urged their audience to abstain from politics and to refrain from hoisting the Congress flag and singing 'Bande Mataram'. At Khagaria (Monghyr), a Youth Conference was held on the 22 of May, but it appears to have been more a Kisan Conference than a Youth Conference and indulged in some rather wild speaking covering the more extreme field of politics.

6. The Kisan movement has been fairly quiet, but there will probably be renewed activity within the next fortnight when the ploughing season begins and there are sign of this particularly in the Patna Division. Many meetings have been held in the Barh sub-division of Patna. It is probable that attempts will soon be made to extend satyagraha in North Bihar at Amwari (Saran) and in the Bahera thana of Darbhanga district. Pandit Rahul Sankritayana who has recently been released from jail has announced his intention of renewing attempts to seize the *bakasht* lands at Amwari and there are indications that an attempt will be made to organize wholesale ploughing of the land. Precautions have been taken. Meanwhile Pandit Rahul Santritiyana has been making much capital in the press out of his alleged ill treatment by the Bihar Government. In the Barahiya Tal dispute, there has at last been some progress. The Arbitration Board has announced its award regarding the distribution of crops between the tenants and the landlords and the division was carried out on 23rd and 24th inspite of an attempt by the kisans leaders to sabotage it. The award concerning the division of land has not yet been announced chiefly owing to the unwillingness of Babu Gangasaran to sign it. Babu Gangasaran is not obstructive. He has been denounced and let down by Babu Karjanand. Meanwhile Karjanand Sharma, the principal local leader and Anil Mitra who were arrested in connection with the Kisans demonstration at Monghyr at the beginning of May, have announced the intention of carrying on a hunger-strike presumably as a last attempt to rally their followers. It seems unlikely that this will have much effect and these two persons have been removed to Bhagalpur Central Jail to get them out of the way. Swarni Sahajanand addressed two meetings at Siwan, one on the 17th to prepare the ground for fresh satyagraha at Amwari and another at Naubatpur on the 24th. The speeches followed the usual lines. There was a meeting of the Provincial Kisans Council at Patna on 19th where resolutions were passed

supporting Pandit Rahul Sankritayana's efforts and authorizing the General Secretary to study the situation in Darbanga district with a view to launching a fresh satyagraha.

7. Swami Sahajanand continues his interest in Jamshedpur where Bengali revolutionary elements have been interesting themselves in the foundation of a Kisan Sabha for Singhbhum. The labour situation at the Indian Copper Corporation's plant is at present quieter. Both sides are awaiting the Labour Commissioner's findings and results of the investigations into the recent assault cases. The Directors of the Company have meanwhile announced that unless the Labour Unions are prepared to abide by the conciliation awards and stop obstructive tactics, they will be obliged to close down the mines. At Giridih there has been an undercurrent of trouble for some time and this has been accentuated by the necessity of gradually closing down parts of the coal mines owing to the exhaustion of the seams. The Railway Administration is compelled gradually to retrench personnel, but has done its best so far to provide alternative employment. On 1 May, 94 persons at Banidih Colliery were discharged and of these 36 were re-employed in other departments and the rest were offered to work as coal cutters which they refused. The local labour leaders organized demonstrations which had to be dispersed and three of the leaders who had previously given security to keep the peace, have been re-arrested. A strike has been in progress at the Shree Bihariji Mills in Patna City since the 22nd and has been attended with some violence which necessitated a *lathi* charge on the night of the 22nd. There were short strikes in lac factories at Pakaur and Balrampur occasioned by the fact the lac manufacturers are no longer able to find a market for shellac and have taken to preparing only seed lac. This change threw a number of workers out of employment. The strikes have since collapsed...

75. All India Kisan Prisoners' Day on 9 July 1939

Bombay Chronicle, 30 June 1939

Bombay
8 June 1939

Meeting of the All India Kisan Committee were held on the 22nd, 23rd and 27th June, 1939 under the presidentship of Acharya Narendra Dev.

Following resolutions were amongst those adopted by the Committee:

This Committee congratulates the Kisans of Bihar, Andhra, Punjab, NWFP, CP and other provinces on the courage and determination with which they have recently initiated extended or intensified their campaigns of direct action to secure their just rights to land, or immediate relief from extortion of the State, Sahukars, Landlords, Co-operative Organisations, etc.

The Committee is deeply grieved to see that Provincial Governments look upon such struggles as attempts to embarrass them and undermine their prestige, and so they try to suppress them with *lathi* charges, brutal assaults and imprisonment. The Committee urges upon all Provincial Governments to study the genesis of these struggles and consider all Kisan representations with broadminded sympathy and make earnest efforts to seek the effective avenues for peaceful solution. In particular the Committee urges the Provincial Governments to prevent illegal or unjust evictions of Kisans from their lands and to reinstate to them where they have been so ejected. The Committee further calls upon the Provincial Governments to suspend the use of all coercive measures, prohibit the use of force against unarmed and peaceful Kisans and to put down the terrorism of the zamindars and their agents.

The Committee at the same time, feels that it may sometimes become necessary for the kisans to resort to direct action, for the defence of their legitimate rights and the enforcement of their just

demands. The Committee, however, warns all provincial organisations and Kisan workers to bear in mind that hasty initiations of such struggles without adequate preparations is bound to retard the progress of the Kisan movement in the country and to injure the interest of the Kisans and the prestige of the Sabha. The Committee further enjoins upon all Kisan Sabhas and Kisan workers to conduct their struggles in a peaceful manner even in face of greatest provocation.

The Provincial Kisan Sabhas are also enjoined to guide all such struggles in their provinces and to see that popular support is mobilized in favour of such struggle.

The Committee demands the unconditional release of thousands of kisans and kisan workers who have been arrested and sentenced on various charges for participating in peaceful mass movements for securing legitimate rights of Kisans.

In particular the Sabha accords its whole-hearted support to the Behar Provincial Kisan Sabha in its fight to secure the full status and privileges of political prisoners for all Kisan prisoners and condemns the obstinate refusal of the Bihar Government to comply with this request resulting in the resumed hunger-strike of Pandit Rahul Sankritiyama and prolonged fast of other comrades in prison.

In view of the rapid increase in the number of Kisan prisoners in Punjab, Bihar, Andhra, CP and other provinces and their treatment as common criminals, the Committee urges all Provincial Sabha following the excellent example of the Bihar Sabha to observe Sunday, 9th July, as the All India Kisan Prisoners' Day to focus public opinion on the gravity of this problem and demand the recognition of kisan prisoners as political prisoners throughout the country.

On consideration of the various reports regarding kisan organisation in Orissa the Committee resolves to depute Swami Sahajanand Saraswati and Mr Jayaprakash Narayan to enquire into the matter on the spot and to take all necessary measure to get the Provincial Kisan Sabha to function again even more actively than before.

This Committee condemns the decision of the Home Minister's Conference to treat all class struggles on a par with communal movements and extend the scope of Section 135-A of the Indian Penal Code so as to penalize the Kisan Sabha propaganda directed against the exploitation and oppression of landlords.

The Committee is particularly shocked to see that even Congress Ministers have allowed themselves to become parties to the new plan of aggression against class organisations which is intended to check the rising tempo of Kisan movement in the country. The Committee trusts that the Kisan Sabha and Kisan workers will continue their work with due sense of their responsibility.

76. (a) Munagala: Andhra Peasants Fight For Land

National Front, 9 June 1939

Following the breach of the terms of settlement arrived at between the zamindar of Munagala estate in Krishna District and the peasants concerned, the latter took direct action during the first days of this month to recover legitimate possession of their lands. The fight has begun in right earnest at Nadigudem near Munagala. The Government ever willing to oblige the zamindar rushed district officers with armed reserve constables to Munagala on 2nd June.

It should be recalled that while the peasants patiently and strenuously did everything to fulfill the conditions of the agreement, paying nearly 1/3 of the total revenue dues, the zamindar did not give effect to a single point in the pact. Having exhausted all their resources in paying the revenue, the peasants, baulked of their just rights were left to starve by inches, due to the lack of food, fodder and drinking water.

Yet the zamindar far from doing anything to relieve the condition of the kisans, hastened to file summary suits for the recovery of rent arrears. Nay, more. Government was persuaded to issue orders as usual under Section 144 against Comrades N. Prasad Rao,¹ N. Venkata Ramanaraya, President, Zamin Ryots Association and 20 other peasants, prohibiting them from carrying on their peaceful agitation. Several criminal cases were also filed against kisans and about 13 peasants have already been arrested.

Deprived thus of their just rights and faced by this orgy of repression the kisans decided to take direct, albeit peaceful, action to secure the following demands including remission of $\frac{1}{4}$ of total dry assessment, grant of *pattas* for Inam lands, return of confiscated lands and property, etc.

(b) Munagala Satyagraha, 110 Ryots arrested

Krishna Patrika, 10 June 1939

Earlier the struggle that broke out between the ryots of Munagala and the Zamindar was brought to a compromise in January with the determined efforts of Sri Gottipati Brahmayya, Secretary of Andhra Provincial Congress Association Committee.

However, now the ryots have resorted to Satyagraha as they argue that the Zamindar has failed to implement the truce agreements (in its true spirit). One of these points in the truce agreement was that the Zamindar has to return back to the ryots those lands of ryots that he illegally occupied. There wouldn't have been any problem if the Zamindar had honoured the agreement by returning those lands. But he did not do so. Instead, he thought that by playing against the ryots, by fomenting troubles among them, he can suppress the ryots and gain benefits from the agreement.

The ryots maintained peace, just because of the fear that any of their actions may put the sanctity of the truce agreement in danger.

As the ryots maintained peace, the Zamindar took them for granted. Their quest for peace was presumed as inaction, and he started harassing the ryots to pay taxes according to his demands and not on the basis of the truce agreement. He also resorted to extract taxes from those *Kamatam* ('Sir') lands which were not a part of the truce agreement. These were some of the 'noble experiments' that Zamindar started practicing.

The condition that criminal cases (against the ryots) were to be taken back was not put in practice, resulting in their being forced to visit the courts frequently. Even though the tax arrears prior to 1936 were to be written off, summary suits were filed in these cases also. Though the grain output was not good, ryots paid the taxes with the sheer determination to honour the truce agreement.

Even after this epic patience, the Zamindar is ready to swallow the ryots. How do the peasants get escaped from his tiger-mouth? It is possible only through Satyagraha.

Citing some points in the truce agreement, the Zamindar tried to illegally occupy the land belonging one 'Yummidi Papayy' in the village of 'Nadigudem'; the Ryots resisted it. A group of eight ryots started ploughing the land. They were arrested by Police Inspector of Munagala. This is the beginning of Satyagraha struggle. Again, another group of ryots, (arrived at the same place), who were arrested by Deputy Superintendent of police, Bezawada.

Next day, District Collector and Superintendent of Police reached the place with 40 Reserve policemen. Thus is how the saga of Satyagraha began and arrests (of ryots) took place. Beginning from 2nd June, a total of 110 ryots got arrested. There was a severe lathicharge on 4 June in which about 35 ryots got injured. The police lathicharged the cattle also along with the ryots.

Sri Kumareddy Satyanarayana, President of the 'Ryot Sangham' (Ryot Association), urged people to observe 11th June (Sunday) as 'Munagala Ryots Satyagraha Day', all across the Andhra country.

¹ Prasada Rao, Nanduri, resident of Gannavaram Taluk, Krishna District, Andhra Pradesh; coming from a rural background, he took part in the anti-war activities; arrested under Defence of India Rules and suffered rigorous imprisonment for one year, 1940-41; was general secretary, 'Andhra Provincial Ryots Association'; was also arrested in 1945.

III. THIRD AND FOURTH QUARTERS OF 1939

76. (c) Munagala Kisan Struggle

Sharaf Athar Ali, *National Front*, 9 July 1939

Tucked up in a peculiar fashion in the Nizam 'Dominions' Munagala estate, a zamindari in the Kristna District of the Madras Presidency lies 70 miles from the town of Bezwada (Andhra); it consists of 42 villages with a rural population of about 18,000 souls.

From the 2nd of June to the 18th June, the brave Kisans of Munagala waged a determined struggle for their rights against the oppressive Zamindar.

As the estate is completely surrounded by Hyderabad State territory, the Zamindar of Munagala under the contiguous feudal influences has found it possible to squeeze the lifeblood out of his peasants.

Causes of Unrest

On extreme pain of social boycott, of the imposition of extortionate fines, the washerman, the barber, the pot maker, the carpenter, the blacksmith, the labourer, and the tenant, every toiler has to perform 'Vetu' or forced labour on the Zamindar's bidding.

Hundreds of peasants are annually dragooned for a fixed number of days to cultivate the landlord's 'Kamatham' (Sir) lands. To this add paddy grinding, supply of milk, vegetables, ghee, fodder, cutting of trees and performance of domestic service free of charge and you get a picture of the scope of oppression.

The house of the feudal lord has netted in some lacs of rupees from the people during the last 30 years solely by means of fines. The Zamindar makes the peasants pay through the nose for everything which makes it possible for them to exist. They must pay for fetching earth and even stones from the fields to use for their mud dwellings, for repairing their wells which are their only source of irrigation in one of the driest tracts of this region. The rights to grazing fields, footpaths and all communal lands have been monopolised by the tyrannical master.

Nor is the naked oppression of the Zamindar confined to the peasantry, petty merchants, shopkeepers, and the small bourgeoisie in general, have been the object of his greed and exploitation. These have had to supply ghee, vegetables, rice and other non-edible goods to the zamindar's officials when in camp, free of charge.

For the last 30 years the Zamindar has been trying all criminal and civil cases himself. Villagers have been forcibly stopped from going to civil or criminal courts for their business. He thus realises fees from the people and more often than not cash is realised from both parties to the dispute! If the peasants go to the proper courts he marks them down for harassment. In this way he completely dominates their lives and swells his revenues.

Supplementing this mountain of feudal oppression the landlord appropriates the lands charged belonging to the peasants when the latter die without children. When land is bought and sold the

landlord must get his share of the transaction money. Moreover, although the peasants irrigate their lands from private wells, nonetheless the Zamindar collects money at wet assessment rates.

The Ryots Association which was started in 1930 has been the special target of the Zamindar's fury. Its leaders were relentlessly persecuted, social boycott was organised against them under the auspices of the Zamindar, their houses were pulled down, their well water was spoilt, some were brutally assaulted, heavy fines were inflicted on others. In this way hundreds were forced to resign from the Association.

Official Testimony

More than one judgment of a Civil or Revenue official bears incontestable testimony to the atrocities perpetrated by the Zamindar. In the case in which Mr K. Atchayya, village Munsif of Madhavaram was assaulted by the Zamindar's men, Mr D. Sivasankaran ICS Sub-Collector remarked in his judgment that there was truth in the village Munsif's cry that the lives of those who go against the wishes of the Zamindar are not safe. The District Munsif, Bezwada, said in his judgement in the Repala Case of 1935 that it should not be forgotten that the complainant who was a powerful man (the Zamindar) could bring pressure on a poor Brahmin like the respondent to write whatever document the former wanted.

Since 1930, eminent leaders like Prakasam (now Revenue Minister, Madras) Biswanath Das (now Prime Minister, Orissa) N.C. Ranga, MLA (Central), K.V. Narayana Rao, MLA, have taken up the cause of the ryots at one time or another. The report published by the West-Kistna District Congress Committee last year details the facts of the reign of terror set up by the Zamindar.

Beginning of Awakening

Things having come to an impossible pass, the West Kistna District Congress Committee, the District Congress Socialist Party and the District and Provincial Ryots Associations began to send workers to the Munagala villages.

Nearly 80 per cent of the adults joined the Congress and the Kisan Sabha, gradually they resisted performing 'vetti' for the Zamindar. The Zamindar now began to try by every means fair and foul to crush the peasants. In such circumstances to avoid increased friction in January this year a compromise was agreed to at Bezwada in the presence of the District Magistrate, Dr Pattabhi (President PCC) and some kisan leaders of the District. According to the conditions of the pact the ryots were to pay all legal rents to the Zamindar; the latter was to return all forcibly confiscated lands, all attachments and sales in his own or his relatives' names were to be considered to be invalid, all pro-notes in his name with regard to the realization of fines were to be rescinded, only dry assessments rates were to be charged for lands irrigated from private wells, pattas were to be granted for all Excess, Title Deed and Service and Artisan Inams appropriated by the Zamindar, money was to be paid by him for all provisions purchased in the market; communal lands now in the possession of the Zamindar were to be separated for the use of the villagers.

The terms of the pact itself bear ample testimony to the rapacious character of this Zamindar's exploitation.

Peasants Launch Satyagraha

Under the persuasion of the Kisan Sabha leaders the peasants paid Rs 30,000, but of a total of Rs 90,000 in rent—this despite the utter poverty to which they had been reduced, but the Zamindar was in no mood to implement a single item stipulated in the pact on his behalf. Taking advantage of the lull he even passed on to the offensive. He launched criminal prosecutions against several peasants, having the ear of the bureaucracy he got Sec. 144 issued against a large number forbidding

them to enter certain fields. The limit was reached when he decided to realise 'Kamatham' rents, which had been excluded from the terms of the pact.

Driven to despair there was no alternative but to meet the Zamindar's offensive squarely through direct action on the part of the peasants.

Satyagraha started on the 2nd June at Nadigudem village on the land of one Immidi Papayya which had been forcibly seized by the Zamindar. A batch of 9 Satyagrahis, lead by Uppalla Ramayya, a local peasant leader, began to till Immidi's land. The Police who had arrived, arrested them all. On the 3rd inst. The principal Socialist Party comrades were arrested. On the 4th inst. A terrific lathi charge was carried out, 35 peasants received lathi blows including an old man of 60 years. All of them were arrested. Each day scores were arrested.

While thus the brave Kisans of Munagala fought, public meetings were held, under the auspices of the Village Congress Committees and Ryots Associations all over Andhra congratulating and sympathizing with the Kisans of Munagala and calling upon the Congress Ministry to help them—at Nellore, Chicacole, Gudivada, Katur, Kurumaddali Koruprolu, Garikaparru, Kalipatnam, Patapudu, Challapalli, Aunavaram, Konacanchi, Pochampalli, Chervukonmupalem, Gowrawarm, Kondapalla, Kodamanchili, Angalur and numerous other places. The heart of every Andhra kisan throbbed in sympathetic unison.

Struggle Disrupted

There was not a single progressive organisation, Congress or otherwise, which did not pass resolutions upholding the cause of the kisans, condemning the police and zamindar and calling upon the Congress Ministry to lend aid to the Satyagrahis and champion the cause of the oppressed. Yet the Madras Ministry refused to do its duty in accordance with the solemn pledges to the people given in the election manifesto, refused to listen to the voice of thousands of citizens, refused to budge while being fully aware of the grievances of the kisans and the oppressive character of Zamindar's rule, also knowing full well the nature of the actual genesis of the struggle. Both the Premier and the Revenue Minister told the kisans and their representatives not to take the law into their own hands but to go to the courts for satisfaction. The same courts which the peasants had been terrorized to avoid for 30 years by the Zamindar!

Playing second fiddle to the Ministry certain quarters in the higher Congress Committees who were themselves thoroughly aware of the entire character of the struggle and whose Committees had actually passed resolutions supporting the Kisan struggle later began to dissociate themselves from the heroic efforts of the kisans. For example, Sjt P. Venkatasubbayya in the course of a statement on the 13th June while recognizing the justice of the kisan cause condemned the Satyagraha as a means of embarrassment to the Ministry.

Thus while the Kisans of Munagala braved lathi charges and arrests, while the splendid cadres of the CSP which had backed the Satyagraha from the beginning, whose members had been among the scores of arrests, whose Executive passed an unequivocal resolution in support of the Munagala struggle on the 5th June—while these latter fought undaunted, the terror of the police and zamindar forces combined with the pressure from the Ministry and the Right Wing Congressmen ultimately prevailed upon the course of the struggle and on the 17th of June the Provincial Ryots Association decided to dispense with the Satyagraha struggle in favour of leaving the matter in the hands of the Congress Ministry. Thus for the time being the Munagala Kisan struggle stands suspended but whether there will be any peace or satisfaction for the Kisans is doubtful.

In the first place not a single grievance has been done away with and in the second place the incorrigible Zamindar has actually proceeded once again to launch upon prosecutions and the issue of injunctions against Kisans through the courts.

77. Fortnightly Report for the period ending 13 June 1939

Fortnightly report for the period ending 13 June 1939, File No. 1, Bihar State Archives

13 June 1939

My dear Russell,

With the advent of the cultivation time the agrarian situation is giving cause for anxiety almost all over the division. There are signs of a determined campaign being waged on behalf of the tenants in order to take possession of Bakasht lands and Satyagraha is being talked of at various places. The agitation is being worked up by the speeches of Swami Sahajanand, Jadunandan Sharma and others. The district officer of Patna reports that the situation in Danapore sub-division is definitely deteriorating. Jagat Narayan Lal, Jagjiwan Ram and Punyadeo Sharma are moving in this sub-division to counteract the effect of Kisan agitation, but I do not expect that the situation will improve unless and until persons like Swami Sahajanand who indulge in wild speeches and incitement to lawlessness and violence, are laid by the heels. I have already suggested to Government that the district magistrate of Gaya be asked to start proceedings against these ring leaders. In Bihar sub-division, the sub-divisional officer has received a letter from Babu Ajodhya Prasad of the Congress Party that the tenants of village Arout, P.S. Chandi, were going to start satyagraha. Mr Jayaprakash Narayan is reported to have advised his audience in a meeting at Bahanpore, P.S. Phulwari Sharif, to stop payment of Chaukidari tax and rent. Such advice is not expected to make for peace and goodwill between landlord and tenant or to encourage a respect for law. The district officer of Gaya reports that speeches delivered by Swami Sahajanand and Jadunandan Sharma—a sample of which has been separately sent up to government (Badauni speech)—leave no doubt that the kisan leaders are anxious to create chaos and confusion by advocating boycott of law courts and united actions by tenants against landlords. Occasional references by the speakers to non-violence mean nothing. Satyagraha is contemplated by these kisan leaders at Paura, P.S. Nawada, Korma, P.S. Warisaliganj, Karma, P.S. Hasua, and Pipra P.S. Dumaria. The district officer adds—‘It is necessary that our plan for meeting the threatened satyagraha should be ready from before and we should be in a position to take action as soon as the situation demands it. I would request that instructions of government on the subject should be obtained at a very early date’. As stated above I have already recommended for government approval of action under sections 107 and 108 CrPC. In Shahabad two of the cases that were pending against the Muriar tenants in the court at Sasaram have ended in favour of the tenants and one in favour of the landlord. In spite of notices which had been given to the district authorities on behalf of these tenants declaring their intention to boycott law courts, there is reason to believe that they are inclined to be more sensible. The district officer is attempting to bring about a settlement between the tenants and 2 or 3 of the more important landlords leaving out one of them who is not inclined to listen to reason. It is being contemplated to have the disputed lands in Muriar cultivated by a third party until the proposed settlement comes off. Trouble is brewing in Bargaon, P.S. Sahar of which Rai Bahadur Harihar Prashad Sinha of Arrah and Burma is the proprietor. The district officer has been successful in persuading the tenants to postpone satyagraha until the 20th of the month when the proprietor is expected to return from Burma and he is given a chance to redress the tenants’ grievances. Notices have been issued announcing a whirlwind lecture tour by Swami

Sahajanand in that part of the Shahabad district where relations between landlords and tenants are strained or where trouble has already occurred. I have advised the district officer to depute a magistrate wherever possible to take notes of the speeches.

78. Nawadha Kisan Conference

Searchlight, 15 June 1939

Nawadah
13 June 1939

The Nawadah Sub-divisional Kisan Conference was held at Nawadah recently under the presidentship of Pandit Jadunandan Sharma.

Swami Sahajanand Saraswati also attended and addressed the conference.

Among the prominent local Congressmen and Kisan workers who took part in the deliberations of the conference were Dr Alakh Narain Verma, Babu Saligaram Prasad Verma, Babu Mathura Prasad Singh and Qazi Mohmed Hussain. Resolution on the Bakasht problems, the news policy and instructions of the government in regard to Section 112A B.T. Act and the Batai system were passed.

While moving the resolution on the application of Section 112A B.T. Act, Babu S.P. Verma appealed to the government that Section 112A should be immediately enforced in the District. He dwelt at length on the poverty of the tenants and said that proportionately the rental fixed by the Revenue authorities at the time of the survey in this district was much more than what was fixed elsewhere. The recent instructions issued by government in regard to the application of Section 112A, he said, were most inopportune. He criticised the halting, hesitating the nervous policy of the government in regard to this matter. He added that this policy tended to create dissatisfaction among the tenantry.

Babu Mathura Prasad Singh, Secretary, Congress Bakasht Committee, drew the attention of the government to the Bakasht problem in the sub-division. He alleged that the attitude of the authorities and specially of the police, was most unsympathetic. He appealed for immediate solution of the problem. He warned the government that patch work would not do and that they should shake off red-tapism and grasp the realities of the situation. He also said that if Ministers felt that they were unable to protect the tenants they should come out of office.

Dr Alekh Narain Verma pointed out the abuses of Batai system and narrated the experience he had gathered in course of his tour in the sub-division. He said that the zamindars unnecessarily adopted a hostile attitude. The result was that the poor tenants were harassed in every way. The authorities also did not extend their helping hands whole-heartedly. Everywhere, he alleged, the zamindars refused to pay the labour charges for cutting and threshing.

Babu Kameshwar Singh and Qazi Mohamed Hussain also made similar remarks and appealed to the Government to take stock of the situation.

79. Indian Peasants Congress at Gaya

News India, 15 June 1939

15 June 1939

Following the meeting of the All-India Kisan Committee at Tripuri, the fourth session of the All-India Kisan Sabha was held at Gaya on April 9th and 10th. Between a hundred and a hundred and fifty thousand Kisans, men and women, attended.

Resolutions

(a) Struggle in Bihar

In addition to an attack on the zamindars, a resolution on the struggle in Bihar included the following:

‘This Sabha strongly disapproves of the attitude and policy of the Bihar Congress Ministry towards these questions. Ever since its acceptance of office, the Ministry has freely used Section 144 of the Criminal Penal Code not only against hundreds of Kisans but also against old tired workers of the Congress, in the name of law and order and under cover of the principle of non-violence. The Sabha is of the opinion that the zamindars have received the inspiration to perpetuate terrorism on kisans from the acts and attitude of the Congress Government.’

(b) Central Provinces Ministry

In the Central Provinces also the Congress Ministry has been faced with the problem of All-India—how to give adequate relief to the peasant without embarking on a social revolution which the Congress ministers have neither the power and strength nor in many cases the will, to lead.

The resolution on this province accuses the Government of refusing to grant suspensions and remissions of rent and revenue sufficient to relieve the kisans in their present distress, due to the failure of crops and the fall in cotton prices. The Ministry is also accused of taking ‘the most ruthless’ measures for extorting rent and revenue, including the attachment and sale of land, cattle, grain and moveables indispensable to the house-holds of the peasants.

(c) Debt Relief

This resolution demands the cancellation of all debts owing by peasants, including agricultural labourers. Pending total cancellation, the provincial governments are urged to accord reliefs including the following:

- (1) Exemption from attachment in execution of civil and revenue decrees of all lands and produce necessary for the maintenance of the kisan’s family; the house, standing crops, milch cattle and household utensils.
- (2) Cheap credit for bona fide agricultural operations.
- (3) Debt legislation applying to Co-operative Societies and Joint Stock Banks and steps to reorganize them in Kisan interests.
- (4) Interest on debts to be limited to six per cent (simple interest).
- (5) No imprisonment for debt.
- (6) The principal amount of debt contracted before 1929 shall be scaled down in proportion to the fall in prices.

(d) Agricultural Labour

The resolution on agricultural labour (quoted below) registers a significant advance in the ‘peasant’ movement of India. The Kisan movement addresses itself more definitely to the problems and conditions of the landless labourer.

‘This Sabha has always recognized that agricultural labourers are an integral section of the class of kisans, and that there can be no real progress of the kisans and regeneration of our rural life until and unless the large body of agricultural labourers is assured of security of employment, minimum wages, humane and self-respectable conditions of life, and freedom from all vestiges of feudal serfdom and bondage.

This Sabha is keenly conscious of the fact that every year more and more landed kisans are becoming landless, and both they and tenants are driven down into the ranks of agricultural labourers by the relentless process of the increasing unprofitability of agriculture, the crushing burden of taxation, etc. and therefore it is in the interests of the whole kisan class itself that the

economic status, social position, and political rights of agricultural labourers shall be raised to as high a level as possible. Therefore this Sabha calls upon all Kisan Sabhas to strive their best to achieve immediately at least the following:

- (i) Complete cancellation of their debts.
- (ii) Reservation of all unoccupied but cultivable lands for their co-operative exploitation by agricultural workers.
- (iii) The establishment of agricultural wage boards consisting of representative of peasant and agricultural labourers, to fix minimum wages and other conditions.
- (iv) Extension of the Workmen's Compensation Acts to them.
- (v) A national policy of housing and protected drinking water supply for them.
- (vi) Penalisation of every kind of illegal exactions, feudal serfdom, forced labour.
- (vii) Repeal of the Criminal Tribes Act (See below):

'Where separate agricultural labour unions have come into existence, it is the duty of the provincial Kisan Sabhas to try to establish friendly contacts with them, and to bring about a settlement of any disputes that may arise between peasants and agricultural workers.

This Sabha exhorts both kisans and agricultural labourers to realize the great and growing need for their united front against all the powerful vested interests which have been crushing them both for ages past, and also for their fighting shoulder to shoulder against both their class enemies and their ally, British Imperialism, in order to wrest complete freedom from them.'

(e) Criminal Tribes Act

The Conference denounced the Government of India's Criminal Tribes Act, and its application by the Bengal Government to kisan leaders in that Province.

(f) Political awakening of India's Peasantry

The Conference passed a number of other resolutions which reflect the interest of the peasants in wide national issues. These include resolutions on political prisoners, kisans in the Indian states, tenancy legislation and the abolition of landlordism.

The most significant and important of the resolutions is the political resolution relating to the national demand. This resolution, after expressing satisfaction at the awakening among the kisans and affirming the hollowness of Provincial Autonomy, held that there had been a great rise in the power and influence of the Indian National Congress, the biggest political organisation in India of the people, power of which was largely drawn from the power of the kisans of the country.

The Sabha, while pledging their fullest support to the Congress in preparation for the struggle according to the Tripuri resolution, hoped that the Congress Executive or the forthcoming All India Congress Committee meeting would take steps to give effect to that declaration and take contemplated preparations in hand.

The resolution further stated: 'The Sabha feels that particular efforts should be made to build up that united front between the Congress and Kisan Sabha which has been the aim of the Sabha, in order that forces of national disunity, which, at bottom, are the expression of upper class materials, do not impair the essential unity of the entire Indian people fighting against imperialism, that must be expressed in action by the Congress.'

After maintaining that the time had come to launch an attack on the constitution in view of the international crisis and other factors, the resolution laid down the programme of action to be followed by the Sabha, as follows:

- (1) Popularisation of necessity of the coming nation-wide struggle and of fighting uncompromisingly against Federation.
- Intensification and integration of the political struggles of the peasants.

- (3) Establishment of a united front between Congress, the All-India Kisan Sabha and the All-India TUC and other anti-imperialist organisations.
- (4) The insistence upon the acceptance and implementing by the provincial government of the immediate demands of the Kisan Sabha and implementing the election manifesto by Congress Ministry.
- (5) Liquidation of forces of communal disruption through the common struggle of the masses for their economic and political demands and through fighting for scrupulous observance of minority rights.
- (6) Organisation of a strong Kisan Volunteer Corps.
- (7) Solidarity demonstration and active help to the States people.

The resolution also recognizes the importance of co-operation between peasants and industrial workers and calls for closer links between the organisations of the two movements.

The resolutions of the Conference as a whole and of this political resolution in particular is a striking demonstration of the rapidly growing political awareness of the Indian peasant.

80. Henry Craik to Linlithgow, 21 June 1939

Linlithgow Collection, Acc. No. 2240, NAI

*Barnes Court
Simla*

4. ... The Lahore Kisan Morcha continues intermittently. For some days early in this month no demonstrator came forward to offer themselves for arrest, but the Provincial Kisan Committee continued its efforts to provide Satyagraha. On 12th June a jatha of about 50 from Jullundar and Amritsar districts was arrested. My Ministers' patience with this tiresome and artificial agitation has now been exhausted and on 15th June it was decided to adopt a more vigorous policy and to prosecute about a dozen organizers. At the same time it was decided to issue the press communiqué of which I enclose a copy.

A somewhat amusing incident has come to my notice in connection with this agitation. We have reason to believe that urgent invitations were issued to Swami Sahajanand, the well-known Kisan agitator of Bihar, and to 'Professor' N.G. Ranga of the Central Assembly to visit Lahore in order to give the agitation a fillip, and my ministers decided to serve both these gentlemen on arrival with orders externing them from the Punjab. However, we saw an intercepted letter dated 12 June from the Swami to Ranga announcing that the Swami did not intend to visit the Punjab and advising Ranga not to go either. The letter concluded somewhat to the following effect:

'Sir Sikander¹ will certainly arrest us, as he knows his business well. He will only gain some cheap publicity and praise, but we will not be able to render any effective aid to our comrades in the Punjab.'

This was very sensible advice and I imagine Ranga, who has been previously externed from the Punjab will accept it.

5. Subhas Chandra Bose paid a short visit to Lahore on the 16th of June at the invitation of a newly formed organisation which calls itself 'The All India Radical Youth League'. This organisation is run by entirely unknown young men, who probably in one way or another made a good deal of money out of Bose's visit. Bose was welcomed at the Lahore railway station by a crowd of about 4 thousand, the great majority of whom were students...

6. I think your Excellency is aware of the bitter campaign which the Ahrars have some years now been carrying on against the Ahmadis, whom they regard as apostates. A big Ahrar conference was announced to be held on the 17th-19th of June at Qadian in the Gurdaspur district, the headquarters of the Ahmadis. The holding of the conference at this place was intended as a deliberate provocation to the Ahmadis and the district magistrate was authorized by government to prohibit it under Section 144 of the Code of Criminal Procedure. When his order banning the conference was published, the Ahrars announced their intention of defying it on a large scale, but my latest information is that they will not do so, as prominent members of the party do not wish to be in jail during the approaching by-election in Amritsar City....

¹ Khan, Sir Sikandar Hayat (1892-1942); Educ. Aligarh Muslim University and London. Recruiting Officer, European War, 1914-18, First Indian to command a company on Active Service, member, Punjab Legislative Council, 1921-42, leader, Unionist Party, acted as Governor of Punjab, 1932 and 1934; Prime Minister, Punjab, 1937-42.

81. Plight of the Farmers of Benaras District: Statement of the District Congress Committee *Aaj*, (Hindi Daily), 22 June 1939

Benaras
20 June 1939

It has come to the knowledge of the Benaras District Congress Committee that the atrocities committed on the district's farmers are growing; that, in the last few months, the zamindars have increased their harassment of the farmers. We see that the zamindars are levying double instalments of revenue. There are also complaints of farmers being framed in false cases of theft, murder and revolt. Cases under Section 107 have been registered against them and it is commonplace to declare them debtors. No receipts are given and later false claims are made about outstanding revenue for two and a half years. It is common practice for zamindars of this district to forcibly evict the farmers, register cases under Section 144 and to attempt to ruin and dispossess them.

Hundreds of complaints have reached the District Congress Committee. We appeal to our zamindars brethren to consider the matter calmly. The time has gone when crime and skullduggery could go unheeded. Times have changed and the cry of the age is that exploitation and atrocities on farmers must stop at once. The farmers have been vigilant and getting geared up to fight against their exploiters in an organized manner. The interest of the zamindars lies in changing their attitude if they wish to survive. Their future is in their own hands. But if they wish to dig their own graves, their tyrannical ways will take them in that direction.

We regret that, blinded by their selfishness, the zamindars are breaking the agreements which they had come to last years with the help of district officials. Perhaps, they feel that now that the former collector, who was acquainted with the district and the ways of the zamindars, is no longer here, it was a good opportunity to do as they wish. It is even more regrettable that the policies and attitude of the present officials is encouraging the zamindars to adopt this stance. We are convinced that the present attitude of the officials will bring a bad name to the Congress Government.

In these circumstances, the District Congress Committee warns the Zamindars' brethren that they should understand that we will not tolerate the continuance of such atrocities on the farmers. The District Congress will fight on behalf of and for the farmers by every possible means.

We are publishing the resolution adopted in this connection by the District Committee for the information of the farmers, zamindars and the district officials.

‘The Benaras District Congress Committee is aware of the atrocities being committed daily on the district’s farmers. It is also aware that to suppress the organized farmers, recoveries of false dues of revenues, no receipts for the dues paid, and in the absence of such receipts dispossessing of the farmers under Section 144, forcible ejection of the farmers from their land, registering of false cases on the farmers and their office-bearers under Section 107 and going back on agreements settled earlier are some of the activities which are going on. Didhvat, Matigaon, Pachokhar, Maddhupur, Sidhna, Kaniyar, Maroogi, Bhanpur are some of the cases in point. The Committee wishes to make it clear that the chief cause for the rise in such atrocities is the present attitude of Government officials. The Committee opposes the atrocities being committed on the farmers as well as the attitude of the officials, and expressing its sympathy for the farmers, appeals to them to gear up to face the situation in an organized manner...’

Devmurti Sharma
Secretary

Jagat Narayan Dube, President,
District Congress Committee, Benaras.

82. Report on the political events in Bihar during the first half of June 1939

Hallet Papers, Acc. No. 3948, NAI

Ranchi
22 June 1939

The district board elections are now complete. The official figures are not yet available, but it appears that out of the 414 seats contested by the Congress, they secured 342 and lost 72. In a number of districts such as Hazaribagh, Manbhum and Gaya, they secured every seat and except in Ranchi, they secured a majority in all the Boards. Except in Muzaffarpur, Ranchi and Singbhum, no other party obtained any substantial voting. Most of the Muslim candidates set up by the Congress were successful.

The attitude of the Left Wing parties to Mr Subhas Chandra Bose’s Forward Bloc is still rather nebulous. Jayaprakash Narayan and P.C. Joshi have recently issued a rather halting statement which serves only to show how confused the position is. While the Communist and Socialist parties are anxious to secure consolidation of the Left Wing interests with a view ultimately to capture the Congress, they are much afraid that the Forward Bloc will develop simply into the opposition party within the Congress and disrupt the Left Wing. A meeting of the Provincial Socialist Party at Dinapore failed to define the party’s attitude and it is unlikely that they will be able to clarify their position until after the projected Conference at Bombay—if then.

The bulk of this report must be devoted to the kisan movement, which appears to be a working to a crisis. This organisation has increased and intensified its activities all over the Patna and Tirhut Divisions during the last three weeks and the ground is being prepared for satyagraha and the seizure of Bakasht lands on a larger scale. Attempts are also being made to spread the movement in the Chota Nagpur Division and it is noticeable that in several districts revolutionaries are coming to the top of the movement. Messrs Sahajanand, Jadunandan Sharma and Rahul Sankritayana have all been touring extensively and their speeches display a more vigorous tone. In a recent speech at Nawadah on 6 June 1939, Swami Sahajanand advised the Kisans to ignore the law and the law courts. At the same meeting he announced that he had changed his views on the use of

violence in self-defence. He now advises the Kisans not to retaliate in public but to use the right of self-defence, if taken by the zamindars to their houses and assaulted privately. These occasional exhortations to non-violence, however, are not likely to counteract the general trend of their speeches expressing contempt for the law and for the Government.

In the Gaya district, a meeting of the Working Committee, held on 6 June 1939, decided on preparations to start satyagraha in a number of centers. Three of these are in the Nawadah sub-division where they hope that their success at Reora will give them a good start; other centers are at Dumaria and in the Arwal and Tikari thanas. In Jehanabad, however, the Kisan Sabha is reported to have incurred much unpopularity among the lower caste Hindus as a result of the district board elections. In Shahabad the Muriar dispute drags on, but there are prospects that some of the parties at least will agree to arbitration. Satyagraha has been threatened at Bargaon, in the same district and notices have been issued announcing extensive tours by Swami Sahajanand in those parts of the Shahabad district where relations are already strained. Satyagraha is also threatened at Arant, police-station Chandī in the district of Patna. In North Bihar there has been even greater activity. Rahul Sankritayana, who became President of the Saran District Kisan Sabha on 28 May 1939, when he held meetings at Amwari, Kadirpur; Bargaon and Chapra assisted by Swami Sahajanand at four centers in the district. Meanwhile, the satyagraha has been proceeding in a desultory fashion at Amwari. The kisans have succeeded with difficulty in ploughing about 10 bighas of land and several attempts to appropriate fruits and fruit trees have been stopped by the police. It is to be intensified and to be extended to the property of the same landlord near Kabirpur. Pandit Sankritayana urged the kisans to start satyagraha wherever this landlord has land and announced his intention of reducing him to beggary. The agitation, therefore, is no longer a matter of agitation to secure the rights of the tenants but a campaign to drive a landlord out of his land altogether.

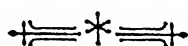
Threats are also being made against the Hathwa Raj. Meanwhile, Pandit Sankritayana has made a new move by organizing a mass demonstration at Chapra for 18 June 1939, to agitate in advance for adequate measures of flood relief. As floods cannot be prevented, he appears to think that this will give him a standing grievance for which Government can find no remedy. From Saran Swami Sahajanand went to Champaran where a district Kisan Conference was held at Kesaria on 29th and 30th May, 1939. Among other things, the Swami advised the Kisans to withdraw from the army, from the police and the government services until the government comes to an end and suggested that during satyagraha the womenfolk should endeavour to enlist the sympathy of the police on their sides. In Muzaffarpur, Jogendranath Shukul has secured the Presidentship of the District Kisan Committee and Babu Awadeshwar Prasad Singh, Secretary to the Provincial Kisan Sabha, has been deputed to organise the Kisans at three villages in the Baruraj, Sadr and Pupri Police Stations for satyagraha. In Darbhanga satyagraha was definitely advertised to commence at Raghopore and Deokuli early this month; but this has been postponed pending the efforts of the Additional district magistrate to negotiate a settlement. All that has happened so far is that a kisan demonstration at district headquarters on 7 June 1939 was led by Babu Dhanraj Sharma in which the local officers were attacked. The Kisan accused and witnesses in the various criminal cases arising out of the dispute have also 'non-co-operated with the courts'.

Efforts to organize agitation are also reported from the Asthawan police station in the Patna district and Nath nagar police station in the Bhagalpur district and a Kisan Thana Committee has been set up by Dayanand Jha at Pirpanti in that district. Efforts to spread Kisan movement to the industrial areas in Chota Nagpur Division are now becoming apparent and are being sponsored by the Left-Wing elements. A Kisan Conference was to have been held at Ghatsila in the middle of this month, but is now likely to be postponed till early in July as Swami Sahajanand is unable to

be present before them. Ghatsila has been obviously selected with a view to linking up the Kisans agitation with labour agitation at Musaboni and Mou Bhandar. At Jamshedpur a meeting was recently held by Nand Kumar Singh, a local Socialist, to agitate against the Dhaibhum estate and Tatas. Again the attempt to link the industrial and agricultural forces is evident. There have been several developments in the Adibasi movement. There has been an agreement between Mr Jaipal Singh and Professor Hayward to amalgamate for political purposes the Adibasi movement with the Munda-Ho-Santal movement headed by the latter. It is doubtful whether this conciliation will have any permanence. Mr Jaipal Singh is also endeavouring to start an aboriginal labour organization. In recent meetings at Jamshedpur he criticized the Ministry for attempting to fill Chota Nagpur industries with Biharis and the management of Tatas for not giving the aboriginals more responsible positions in the works. His affiliation with the Bengali element is becoming more marked as was illustrated on 28 May, 1939 at a meeting organized by the Bengalis in Ranchi to support Mr Subhas Chandra Bose's Forward Bloc. A Muslim League meeting at Ranchi expressed sympathy with the Adibasis, as a minority community and as mentioned in my previous reports, the Adibasis received some support from the Muslim League during the district board elections. Since the elections, signs of disruption have appeared in the party. There is a good deal of lobbying in progress between the various parties in the new district board and it is reported that several of the Adibasi members have gone or are willing to go over to the Congress Party...

The labour situation at Jamshedpur is somewhat confused. Homi has re-entered the lists against Professor Bari and is making a fight for the adherence of local Labour. He tried to organize a slow down in the Tata Works, but this attempt failed. Meanwhile, Mr Jaipal Singh's attempting to form a separate organisation of the aboriginal elements and the opening of local branch of the Muslim League both at Jamshedpur and Moubhandar is tending to create another line of cleavage among the labourers. There is also dissatisfaction with Professor Bari's leadership and Gurdit Singh, the Sikh leader, has told the Tinsplate employees that he would lead them himself if Professor Bari, on whom they should rely at present, fails them. Some of the executive members of the Wire Products Company Labour Union advocate shaking off his leadership of the Union on the ground that he is not whole-heartedly supporting their interests.

The situation at Musaboni is quiet. At the Peninsular Tobacco Company, Monghyr, there has been slowing down owing to the discharge of 300 temporary employees. The Management is reluctant to negotiate with the leader of the Union, but neither side is anxious to force the issue. The strike at Bihariji Mills in Patna City, mentioned in my last report, ended on the 5 June 1939. The strike was accompanied by intensive forms of picketing and much obstruction and the police were forced to make a lathi charge on the 27 May, 1939, in which a few minor injuries were caused. The settlement was finally reached after the arrest of Babu Ram Brksh Benipuri, the President of the Union. Matters are quiet at Giridih, since the departure of Dr Satyanarayan Singh and the issue of notices of proceedings against the local leaders, Sharat Chandra Patnaik and Baldeo Singh. The Union now wants to elect Jogendra Shukul as its leader...



83. All-India Kisan Sabha Executive meets

File No. 806 (53) BIV, 1939, Home Dept. (Special), Government of Bombay, Maharashtra State Archives

Bombay
23 June 1939

The Executive Committee of the All India Kisan Sabha met at the Servants of India Society's Hall on 22nd June under the Presidentship of Acharya Narendra Dev. About 20 persons, including the following were present:

1. Swami Sahajanand Saraswati
2. Prof. N.G. Ranga
3. Jayaprakash Narayan
4. Jamaluddin Bukhari
5. Indulal K. Yagnik
6. P.D. Marathe (CP)
7. Babu Ganga Sadan (Bihar)
8. Ram Kishan (Punjab)
9. Chandra Bhan Bhatt (Gujarat)
10. P.B. Muchandi (Karnataka)
11. N. Gangaprasad
12. Shivlinga Prasad (Andhra)
13. Shib Nath Bannerji (Communist, Bengal)
14. Sohan Singh Josh (Comunist, Punjab)
15. V.M. Bhuskute (Maharashtra)

The Committee considered, *inter alia*, the desirability of changing the Constitution of the Kisan Sabha with a view to making the Sabha a part of the Congress organisation in order to avoid the possibility of its being relegated to the background without Congress recognition, in the event of the All India Congress Committee accepting the recommendation of the Constitution Sub Committee in regard to the proposed changes in Rule 5(c) of the Congress Constitution. The principal amendments to the Kisan Sabha constitution which were considered, seek to fix the objectives as a Democratic State in which political and economic power will be vested in the masses and to re-organise the Kisan Sabha on the basis of minimum demands in the day-to-day struggles that arise.

It was further argued that the Sabha should strive to gain economic freedom for the masses and to achieve complete independence.

After discussing the question of the necessary quotas of the delegates from the various provinces and other matters of a routine nature, the Committee adjourned to 24th June.

(2) The Executive Committee of the All India Kisan Sabha met in Bombay on 22nd, 24th and 27th June; under the presidentship of Acharya Narendra Dev. About 20 persons attended ...

The Committee considered the desirability of changing the Constitution of the Kisan Sabha with a view to making the Sabha a part of the Congress organisation in order to avoid the possibility of its being relegated to the background without Congress recognition.

On the second day the Committee reviewed the kisan movement in Orissa and advised Swami Sahajanand and Jayaprakash Narayan to tour the Province along with Prof. N.G. Ranga if possible. The Committee also decided to observe a 'Kisan Political Prisoners' Day' on 9th July.

On the third day the Committee discussed the AICC resolution banning Civil disobedience by various organisations within the Congress without the permission of the Provincial Congress Committee and decided to request the Congress Working Committee to withdraw it.

The Committee also passed amongst others resolutions

(1) criticizing the Home Minister for supporting the new offensive launched by the Central Government against class organisations and

(2) advising the Provincial Ministries not to launch any satyagraha prematurely or without adequate resources and preparations and to guide the Kisan struggle with a due sense of responsibility.

28 June 1939

The All India Kisan Committee met again on 27th June at the Servants of India Society Hall under the Presidentship of Acharya Narendra Dev.

Jayaprakash Narayan, Swami Sahajanand Saraswati, Prof. N.G. Ranga, Hariprasad Desai, Jamaluddin Bukhari, S.V. Deshpande and Vasant B. Khale were among those present.

The All India Congress Committee resolution banning civil disobedience by various organisations within the Congress without the permission of the Provincial Congress Committee was discussed and it was decided to request the Congress Working Committee to withdraw it in view of the facts that it went against the fundamental right of the kisans to take direct action to achieve their demands and would deprive kisans of their leadership in case disciplinary action was taken against those participating in the kisan struggle.

The Committee also passed resolutions—

(1) criticising the Home Ministers for becoming parties to the alleged new offensive launched by the Central Government against class organisations;

(2) advising the Provincial Kisan Sabhas not to launch any 'satyagraha' prematurely or without adequate resources and preparations, and to generally guide the kisan struggle with due sense of responsibility; and

(3) congratulating the Kisans of Bihar, Andhra, Punjab, CP and other Provinces who had taken part in Kisan struggles.

The Committee also decided to request Provincial Ministries to suspend all coercive processes in the collection of taxes and not to look upon Kisan Satyagraha as offensive against themselves and to help Kisans in their struggle for a decent living.

The official resolution banning independent Satyagraha, passed by the All India Congress Committee, appears to have considerably sobered down the Kisan Sabha leaders as would be seen from the above decisions.

84. Extract from the weekly confidential report of the District Magistrate, Surat, 29 June 1939

Home Dept. (Spl.), File No. 800 (53), B IV, 1939, Government of Bombay, Maharashtra State Archives

29 June 1939

A public meeting (100) was held at Amba Pardi, Taluka Mandvi, on 21 June 1939. Narsibhai Akhabhai addressed the meeting and congratulated Mala Vasawa of the village on his release from jail, where he had been imprisoned for his kisan activities. Mala Vasawa in turn addressed

the meeting and said that kisans would have to go through considerable troubles and difficulties before they are able to establish their rights as men. Therefore, they should not fear jail at all.

In the village of Khoj, Taluka Bardoli, on 21 June 1939 one Nathu Jina, a Halpati leader, addressed a meeting (300) of Halis. He advised the Halis that their boys should rather spin and weave than go after cattle.

The Dhaniamas are calling for work only those Halpatis who are strong and who are already indebted to them. Old and weak Halpatis and those that are not indebted do not get a call and those that get a call take up the cause of those not getting a call, and thus the relations between the Halis and farmers are very much strained in many villages of Bardoli Taluka. Only a small number of Halis who are attached to the Mohmedan farmers at Bardoli Kasba, Vankaner, Kadod, etc. seem to be at peace with their Dhaniamas, working on old terms.

One Ramubhai Govind of Siker addressing a meeting of farmers held at Akoti said that they should try to strike at the very root of the strife. They should enroll as many members of the Congress as possible so that they can have their own Taluka Samiti. The present members of the Congress Committee should be replaced by their own representatives. Then only they would be able to show their strength. This Ramubhai Govind is a member of the Farmers' Association.

Some of the Dhodias of Paria, Pardi Mahal, who had cut down babul trees are being prosecuted for an offence under sec. 379, IPC. The police have also lodged against these Dhodias a complaint for an offence under section 332 IPC. The Dhodias, it appears, are acting under the instructions of a kisan leader, Burjorji Vicaji of Bulsar.

The skies are shrouded with leaden clouds, but are not yielding even a drop of rain. The continued drought is causing very great anxiety all round, so much so that public prayers are being offered in the city of Surat for the Heavens to be propitious and open their flood-gates.

85. Kisan Sabha, The Common Platform for Gandhites and Socialists

Article by N.G. Ranga, *Modern Review*, Vol. LXVI, July 1939, pp. 66-69

We all know that our Kisans are utterly poor and helpless, their houses are little better than hovels, their clothing is inadequate and of poor quality, their food lacks variety in addition to being of very poor quality and their social environment is extremely depressing. Who can say that our villages are really inhabitable, that the water our villagers get to drink is either good or wholesome, not to speak of being sufficient, and that the social life prevailing is either stimulating or inspiring? Is there then any wonder if the migration of rural folk to towns goes on unimpeded and or villages are denuded of almost every educated young man? Indeed, it is one of the ironies of our economic fate that the least educated man earns much more by becoming a teacher or a postal peon or a daffadar in a Taluk office than the most skilled Kisan, while all the time the former is having an easy time of life in his occupation when contrasted with the arduous and nerve-racking toils of the latter without any limitations of hours of labour or any regular holidays or even an assurance of a stable income; even if it be the smallest.

Both Socialists and Gandhites wish to end this miserable state of things. They sincerely desire that our Kisans ought to rise to their fullest stature and win an adequate place in our political system and enjoy a decent self-respecting and progressive state of social existence.

Differences

But they seem to differ from each other in the approach they make to the Kisans' problems. The socialists wish to help Kisans first by removing all those institutions and agencies which today drain away the resources of our Kisans. They argue that as long as the rents and land revenue

demands, the interest charges and marketing costs remain so high, it is small consolation to our Kisans to be able to earn a little more, for out of every rupee they earn by their hard labour, the major portion goes to feed the various classes of parasites. Hence their primary concern with the fight for the elimination of these parasites. There is certainly reason on their side; because every year, the State collects more than 25 crores of land revenue, the landlords 80 crores, the money lenders nearly a hundred crores whereas the merchants and traders absorb easily 150 crores. Thus if this drain is stopped our Kisans will straight away be in possession of at least Rs 350 crore per annum or Rs 10 per annum per head as contrasted with their per capita income of Rs 25 per annum. Hence their pre-occupation with the agitation to abolish the Zamindari and Sahukari systems, the middle-men and tax gatherers.

On the other hand, the Gandhites impelled as they are by equally noble love for the welfare of our Kisans, think that it may take a long time to achieve the abolition of all these various exploiting agencies and that in the mean-while, we cannot and shall not be indifferent to the possibilities of augmenting the slender resources of Kisans and otherwise minimizing their day-to-day sufferings. Mahatma Gandhi himself contemplates the possibility of someday eliminating the Zamindari system itself. But he is not prepared to demand its immediate abolition lest it should jeopardize our present political fight. Therefore, they busy themselves with attempts to increase the avenues open to Kisans to earn a few more rupees.

Naturally the next point to be made clear is whether there is any real difference of views between these two schools of thought and two groups of workers. Yes, there is. The Socialists think that the interests of landlords and Kisans are irreconcilable and Kisans can be saved only if the Zamindari system is abolished. Similarly they stand for the nationalization of money-lending business and co-operatisation and nationalization of agricultural marketing. But the Gandhites believe in class collaboration and so hope that some day the landlords will of their own accord, but of course in response to the exigencies of times, be willing to give up their worldly hold over kisans and thus eliminate themselves as a class. Hence their opposition to the Social slogan for the abolition of the Zamindari and other parasitical systems.

But both these groups of workers are united in their anxiety to strive their best to ameliorate the existing conditions of kisans to the extent possible under the present circumstances and thus if need be, to lessen the control of landlords, money-lenders, etc. over our kisans' economic life.

Unfortunately, even in this attempt, they happen to pursue two different and almost antagonistic methods. The Gandhites attempt, as in Bihar, to bring about an agreement between tenants and landlords in order to pass any Tenancy Legislation even though they have had to fight in the general election the very same zamindars on a definite economic programme embracing tenancy reform. But Socialists think this procedure to be wrong and even unfair. They feel that even at the time of formulating the Congress election programme and later on, when the Bihar Tenancy Bill was being drafted, the Congress had taken note of the clause of zamindars under the existing circumstances and therefore, to try to come to an agreement thereafter would only mean and had actually meant making further concessions to zamindars at the expense of kisans, for the questionable advantage of buying peace with them.

Moreover there is one other but equally important difference. The very circumstances which necessitate certain reforms oblige landlords to agree to them and make it possible for Congress Ministry to effect them, are themselves shaped only a political force and an economic portent by a conscious agitation of Kisans who are actuated by their desire to abolish the Zamindari system and ably assisted by the poignant economic and social sufferings of the kisan masses. Therefore, Socialists maintain that unless they 'turn their back' on the class collaboration theory they cannot

bring about the 'circumstances' which are taken to be our sanctions to oblige both the Government and Zamindars to yield to our immediate demands.

No Reason for their Mutual Non-co-operation

These differences are fundamental though they are not such to force these two great groups of Kisan friends to non-co-operate with each other. Given their anxiety to serve our kisans and their readiness to sacrifice their all for the service of these dumb millions, they must be willing to co-operate with each other on the expansive areas of rural reconstruction and kisan regeneration.

Let us explore these possibilities for their mutual co-operation. They both can work together in framing schedules of the minimum and immediate demands of our kisans, based upon carefully conducted economic surveys of our rural conditions and kisan life. In conducting Kisan marches, celebrating kisan days and approaching the local authorities in order to represent to the public at large and the officials concerned the troubles and needs of our Kisans; in fighting corruption in the services and the collection of illegal exactions, they can work together. In spreading among kisans nationalist and Kisans literature and in awakening in them an interest in education, clean and beautiful life, there is much scope for co-operation. The improvement of public health and sanitation of our villages, the beautification of our villages and modernization of our homes need their joint efforts. To fight cholera and the epidemics and to minister to the needs for medical assistance of our Kisans as well as their cattle every one's help is needed. One can multiply many such needs of our kisans to satisfy which every well-wisher of our rural folk can put his shoulder to the task without sampling about his difference with other workers over other matters.

A common platform

But what is the platform and the means through which both these two groups can co-operate with each other for the benefit of their common friend, the Kisan? I say, it is the Kisan Sabha. Immediately, a Gandhite may jump up and say, it is so much under the influence of Socialists. My answer to him is that it shall not be made a stumbling block to his offer of co-operation. Just as Socialists have loyally worked in the Congress under the orders of Gandhites who have been so prepondera in power in the Congress, so also Gandhites ought to be willing to utilize the Kisan Sabha platform in order so serve the kisan, the common object of service. Moreover, my appeal for making the Kisan Sabha, the common platform for both the groups to render their service to our kisans is also based upon the fact that it does actually attempt to implement the practical programmes of these two groups.

Just because the movement for the abolition of the Zamindari and Sahukari system is of such paramount importance and has such a wider appeal to the public that the other activities of our Kisan Sabhas have not attracted as much attention of the public as they deserved.

Constructive Work of Kisan Sabhas

Like the Gandhites, our Kisan Sabhas have also recognized the advantages of attempting to put a few more pies into the pockets of our kisans without any more delay by every possible legitimate means that offers itself. That is why our Kisan Sabhas are everywhere found enthusiastically supporting all handicrafts, which promise some more income to our under employed kisans. It is Kisan Sabhaites who are totally co-operating with the AISA people in the Hisar, Talcher and Rayalaseema Relief camps. The Andhra Kisan Sabha has taken the initiative in awakening the handloom weavers to organize themselves into their class organisations and so have the Kerala Kisan Sabhaites. The hand pounding of rice and the hawking of the products of village industries have found enthusiasts among our Kisan Sabhaites.

What is even more surprising is that they find time in the midst of their breath-taking propaganda against the system of landlordism and money-lending to persuade our peasants to grow more and more vegetables to utilize all their refuse water to grow some plants and creepers in their yards or by their houses, to keep their houses and clothes clean and to simplify and beautify their villages and homes in a Gandhian manner.

Some Andhra Kisan Sabhaites have actually organized the Andhra Ayurvedic Veterinary College and trained nearly a couple of hundred Kisan youths in this medicine, thus doing pioneering work for the whole of India. Today there are 50 Veterinary Dispensaries all over Andhra each one attending to the medical needs of the kisans cattle of the neighbouring ten or twenty villages. Surely, this is an achievement which can gladden the heart of the greatest Gandhite.

The Village Panchayat Movement also owes much of its progress in Southern India to our Kisan Sabhaites. It is no exaggeration to say that wherever a Kisan Sabha is organized there spring up in its wake, a local reading room or library, a night school, for adults or a village public hall. The village panchayat and the library are usually followed by the establishment of roads and the provision of literature for our kisans.

These are activities which are so familiar to Gandhites because they have been engrossed in them during the last twenty years and with such excellent results. It may be our Kisan Sabhas are not able to devote as much time to them as they ought to and as many of our Kisan Sabhaites as needed are not able to devote all their resources to them. But the accounts shows that our Kisan Sabha is alive to their importance and is anxious to devote as much of its attention and resources as it can, considering its poverty in men and money.

Therefore, it has a legitimate claim on the services and resources of all Gandhites.

Kisan Sabhaites Appreciate Gandhian Services

Let no Gandhite be under the mistaken notion that Kisan Sabhaites being mostly Socialists in their outlook, are inclined to look down upon the activities of his group, for I am glad to say, that our Kisan Sabhaites are realizing more and more the extraordinary significance and the all embracing nature of the services rendered by Gandhites to our rural folk on the inspiration of Mahatma Gandhi. They are surprised sometimes, to find signs of the slow but sure influence of Gandhian work in many aspects of our kisan life. Starting from his income, we have the charkha and the AIVIA to minimize the under employment of our kisans and to increase his earnings. Such earnings may not be much but in the absence of any other source of additional income, they mean a lot. The Village Panchayat and co-operative movements have won the support of Gandhites. Experiments are being made with the diet of the masses and the hand-pounded rice has already emerged as a full-fledged dietary improvement and Gandhiji is giving many points to Government experts on dietetics. Village sanitation is provided with the trench latrines, which are cheap to make and profitable sources of manure and commodious conveniences. The Mud and Naturopathy, Ayurvedic and Unani treatment, popularized at such great pains by Gandhiji are today lessening the dependence of our villagers on costly western medical treatment. The Ideal Home Exhibitions and the production of simple but decorative furniture and the designing of artistic but cheap patterns of clothes, all carried on under the influence of Mahatmajee and all showing the way as to how to make a poor kisans' house and apparel both beautiful and cheap, enjoyable and attainable.

Gandhi has realized that our agriculture is most inefficient and our kisans very defective in their methods and highly incompetent to face the competition of the world market. Therefore, the Wardha scheme of education is devised to attain two ends at the same time; to train our kisan youth in the arts of handicrafts and science of agriculture and also to provide free, advanced and modern education for all the masses.

Our socialists may like our Kisans not to be lost in their attempts to gain a few more coins or to learn their craft a little better to so great an extent as to become indifferent to the needs of organising themselves to fight their class enemies. But they are second to none in realising the real revolutionary as well as constructive significance of these and many such other reconstructive moves initiated by Mahatmaji and implemented so enthusiastically by his disciples.

Therefore, I feel that there is at present a proper atmosphere in which both Gandhites and Socialists can genuinely co-operate with each other on the Kisan Sabha platform in order to save our kisans from their economic and social degradation and help them to gain their proper places in the future government of India.

They need not give up their respective fundamental positions in regard to their attitude towards the class war but subject to that difference they can certainly work hand in hand in our Kisan Sabha for redressal of the day-to-day grievances and disabilities of kisans in achieving their immediate demands vis-à-vis the vested interests as well as Government and in obtaining as much additional economic protection as possible.

86. Report on political events in Bihar during the second half of June 1939

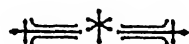
Hallet Papers, Acc. No. 3948, NAI

Ranchi
6 July 1939

2. ... The agrarian situation continues to deteriorate and reports of attempts of threats to seize bakasht land have come in from nearly every district in Bihar. Chota Nagpur remains quiet. The speeches of the principal leaders seem to have become noticeably more intemperate and several of them have openly advocated breaking the law. Swami Sahajananda in speeches in Shahabad is reported to have suggested among other things united raiding of sweet-meat shops to appease hunger; Rahul Sankritayana in Saran is said to have encouraged kisans to travel to Chapra for a demonstration without railway tickets and at a subsequent meeting told them to be prepared to cut the railway and road embankments, if necessary, when the floods come; while Jadunandan Sharma in a speech at Pipra in Gaya district looked forward to the day when kisans should be supplied with pistols to use against anyone who forcibly entered their houses, and in another speech at Gharawan in Patna district hinted very broadly at the possibility of winning over the police constables to the kisan movement. The resolution passed by the All India Congress Committee forbidding satyagraha by Congressmen without the permission of the Congress has greatly upset the kisan leaders, as it faces them with the choice of abandoning their favourite weapon or making a definite breach with the Congress.

3. The main storm centers have been Gaya, Bihar sub-division of Patna district and Saran. In Gaya, satyagraha has been threatened at various places situated in no less than 11 thanas, but in most of these the situation has not yet come to a head. Kisan volunteers with red flags have been much in evidence all over the district. The worst area at present is Dumaria police-station where attack has been concentrated on the zamindari of Babu Ram Bhajan Singh of Pipra. On the 14th June tenants attempted to plough the bakasht land but were resisted. On the following day Jaglal Mahto, a Kisan leader, proceeded with 100 kisans and ploughed and sowed the whole of the land. On the 18th Jadunandan Sharma arrived and delivered the speech already mentioned in which he threatened, if the Kisans' demands were not conceded within eight days, to cut the jungles. In Patna three cases of rioting have occurred in the Bihar sub-division. On the 14th there was a riot

between landlords and tenants at Ranibigha (police station Asthawan) over the crops of land the possession of which had already been declared in favour of the zamindar under section 145, Criminal Procedure Code. On the 19th a riot took place at Kundi, police station Bihar, where the tenants ploughed up bakasht land. The landlord's party turned out and one of the tenants was wounded by a gunshot. At Ghosrewan (police station Giriak) a bakasht dispute was reopened which had been amicably settled last year on lines on the whole favourable to the tenants. The tenants now claim the rest of the land and on the 12th Jadunandan Sharma went there and delivered an inflammatory speech in which he advised satyagraha and stressed that police constables are also Kisans and should demand land and go on strike if they do not get it. As a result the villagers performed mass satyagraha on the 20th when the zamindar tried to plough the land. The Sub-divisional Officer issued orders under section 144 and took out a force of police. As these orders were defied, 11 arrests were made. Owing to obstruction by one whole village, the police were unable to remove the prisoners from 9.30 in the morning until armed police arrived at 5 p.m. In view of these incidents, a force of armed police has been posted to Bihar. Threats to seize bakasht land are also reported from Paliganj, Bikram and Masaurhi thanas of Patna district. In Shahabad Swami Sahajanand made a tour before his departure for Bombay, from the 12th to the 14th; but there have been no incidents of note since. The bakasht dispute at Muriar which has been going on since November 1938, has now at last been referred to arbitration. In Tirhut also the Raghapur dispute (Darbhanga) has been settled on terms very favourable to the tenants. His success in this case has encouraged Babu Jamuna Kajree, MLA, to tackle the Darbhanga Raj State and repeated attempts have been made to seize land in village Narpatnagar, Kanakpur and Sakri of which the State claims to have been in cultivating possession for several years. A clash is reported to have taken place on the 24th and a number of arrests were made. On the 20th he returned to Chitauli to lead the attempts to seize the landlord's bakasht. A clash occurred between his men and the landlord's party in which two of his volunteers were beaten. As he persisted in his attempts to seize the land he has arrested on the 23rd and tried and convicted the same day under Sections 143, 447 and 117, Indian Penal Code, and sentenced to eight months' rigorous imprisonment and despatched to the Hazaribagh Jail where he immediately started a hunger strike which is still in progress. The pretext for the hunger strike is the same as on the last occasion, viz., a demand for the classification of all Kisan prisoners as politicals and the supply of a long list of luxuries. His example has not improved the discipline of the Chapra Jail where the ring leaders of the Amwari Satyagraha defied orders and refused to proceed to cells when published with solitary confinement. They have since been removed to the Daltonganj Jail except two hunger-strikers. In Muzaffarpur three new areas are threatened with satyagraha in addition to those mentioned in my last report; the District Kisan Sabha has decided to enroll 300 volunteers to start attempts on bakasht lands in thanas Mahua, Patepur and Sheohar. Champaran is quiet at present. The settlement in the Barahiya Tal dispute (Monghyr) has been short-lived. It caused dissatisfaction to some of the landless labourers as it did not fulfil the extravagant promises held out to them by Karjanand Sharma. This threatened to discredit the Kisan leaders and accordingly the Provincial Committee has hastened to pass a resolution rejecting the entire award. It is possible therefore that the trouble will begin again next October. Elsewhere in Monghyr district there has been trouble in police-stations Gogri and Bariarpur. In Bhagalpur there was a small Kisan demonstration at Madhipura subdivisional headquarters on the 22nd, and in Purnea there is tension between the tenants of the Darbhanga Estate and Sanial cultivators over the question of rent-receipts. Arbitration Committees have failed to settle the matter and there may be further trouble...



87. Congress and the Kisan Sabha

Editorial, *Indian Nation*, 6 July 1939

6 July 1939

The speech reported to have been made by Swami Sahajanand at a public meeting in Patna on the occasion of the kisan and labour prisoners' day is quite characteristic of the man. Swami Sahajanand expressed the view that the Kisan Sabha would defy the Patel resolution of the Provincial Congress Committee. In his own supreme wisdom he is certain that the cause of the Kisans is just and that they are not going to accept the implications of the AICC resolution. The situation that emerges as a result of Swami Sahajanand's unrestrained utterance is perfectly clear. It is that the Kisan Sabhaites can have no place in the Congress organisation so long as they accept the Swami's view and are prepared to defy the Congress resolution about resort to satyagraha. The only alternative before them is to make an exit from the Congress and continue to pursue their programme from a platform from which they cannot claim any Congress prestige or association. After the defiant tone assumed by Swami Sahajanand we will be very much surprised if the Provincial Congress Committee stands by and does not take disciplinary action against him and his followers. That is in fact the only obvious course that the Congress Committee can follow in the light of the speech delivered by Swami Sahajanand. It is also the one course that they will have to adopt in view of the circular issued by the Congress General Secretary. The time has definitely come for a parting of the ways between the Kisan Sabhaites of the Sahajanand school and the official Congress.

88. Kisan Sabha Faces Crisis

Bombay Chronicle, 8 July 1939

Patna

-7 July 1939

The Bihar Kisan Sabha is faced with a serious crisis and imminent split is threatened on the question whether to obey or not to obey the All India Congress Committee resolution banning Congressmen from starting Satyagraha without the permission of Provincial Congress Committee.

The President and Secretary of the All India Kisan Sabha are at 'war' with each other over this question for, while Acharya Narendra Dev has counseled obedience to the AICC resolution, Swami Sahajanand has openly called for defiance of the same. At Delhi the conference of Socialists passed a resolution accepting the AICC resolution but the General Secretary of Kisan Sabha has issued a circular calling upon Congressmen to disregard the resolution. The Socialist—Kisan Sabha 'spiritual alliance' is shortly to end as a result of this development. Socialists are forced with the difficult choice.

There are three groups in Kisan Sabha extremists led by Swami Sahajanand, who have long since been pressing for separation of Kisan Sabha from the Congress; Kisan Sabhaites under Mr Jayaprakash who are against separation; yet another group led by ex-Revolutionaries who are for exploiting Congress' name for their own end.

At the last meeting of the Kisan Sabha before the All India Congress Committee meeting at Bombay Swami Sahajanand's informal proposal to separate Kisan Sabha from the Congress was unceremoniously rejected as a result of the spirited opposition from Mr Jogendra Sukla ex-Andamanite who was backed by the majority, but political circles believe that Swami Sahajanand might now succeed in his attempt. If he does so, he will have to pay a heavy price. He will have to

part company with his Socialist advisers and Acharya Narendra Dev will have to resign from the presidency of the All India Kisan Sabha. The question of Kisan Sabha MLA's will become a problem.

89. Congress and the Kisans

Home Department (Special), File No. 800 (53), BIV, 1939, Government of Bombay, Maharashtra State Archives

Extract from the weekly confidential report of D.M. East Khandesh, 7 July 1939

A meeting was held at Bhusaval on 24 June 1939 where the speaker Pandrang Sadashiv Sane of Amalner said that the Congress Ministry wanted to oppose the Rulers whenever it was necessary to do so, but now the attitude of the Ministers had completely changed and they had become friends of the British Rulers. By the help of the Kisans and labourers Congress was able to form a majority in the Assembly and thus could capture the Government but the movements of these Kisans and labour had now been declared to be unconstitutional by the Congress. He told the audience that it was the duty of the Congress to help the Kisans and labourers who formed the majority and requested them to guard the interest as they were the creators of national wealth.

90. *Bakasht* Problem

Editorial, *Indian Nation*, 16 July 1939

16 July 1939

The *Bakasht* land problem in Bihar is assuming huge dimensions. Not a single day passes without some report or other being received from some part of the province or other that zamindars' *bakasht* lands are raided, that the standing crops are forcibly cut or that the crops cut have been forcibly appropriated, that some zamindar has been assaulted or treated worse while resisting the illegal entry by Kisans into the land and so on. These manifold illustrations of Kisan depredations on the other hand are only the outward manifestations of a deep rooted tendency on the part of Kisans to indulge in lawlessness by while posing as a oppressed party. We do not think, as has been sought to be made out by certain quarters, that in many ascertainable number of cases the aggressors can be said to be the zamindars...

The *Bakasht* Land Restoration Act was passed by the Bihar Legislature with the full concurrence of the land-holders and we believe that, as a class, they are prepared to abide by the provisions of that legislation in the matter of restoring *bakasht* lands to the tenants. We do not presume or claim to speak on behalf of the Bihar Landholders' Association; but we confidently believe that the Association also will agree with us when we put forward the above proposition. It is the other side, namely, the Kisans, who do not recognize the existence of this legislation on the statutes book but who proceed to take the law into their hands as if there is no other rule but the rule of force, and as if, even granting they are not as resourceful as the zamindars, resourcelessness or weakness justifies their acting in any manner they like with perfect impunity.

Nor can the Government be exonerated completely from the responsibility and blame for the enormous deterioration in the situation in connection with the *bakasht* lands satyagraha. As a party to the Congress—zamindar agreement no less than as a body responsible for the satisfactory governance of the province, it was the Government's elementary and imperative duty to enforce the provisions of the Act which was adopted at their instance and prevent an open and organized defiance thereof. Instead of this, they are exhibiting an amazing ineptitude in dealing with the

situation, with the result that the entire province is becoming a hot-bed of disorder and lawlessness, rights of person and property are freely and fearlessly invaded and trampled upon and big and small zamindars alike are becoming the victims of a ceaseless campaign of rapacity. We have seen and heard it argued that the Kisans being the dispossessed party they should be supported against the dispossessor namely the zamindar. The supreme illogic of this proposition is evident when we realise that the Kisan Sabha propaganda extends to every kind of bakasht land, whether under the cultivating possession of the zamindar for a long or short period, and that it does not discriminate between one category of bakasht lands and another. Further while the Kisan Sabhaites have been carrying on their mendacious campaign of vilification and are resorting to every mode of force to attain their objective of securing possession of the bakasht lands over which they think they have got a claim, the zamindars are feeling completely helpless, distressed and incapable of doing anything to protect themselves...

91. On the *Bakasht* Problem in Bihar

Note on the nature of the *Bakasht* problem in Bihar, File No. 28 (VII)/1939, Special Section, Government of Bihar, Bihar State Archives

The unrest among the agricultural population in many parts of Bihar which has been developing for some years and has culminated in an extensive agitation organised mainly by the Kisan Sabha springs from a number of causes. The economic depression of the last 10 years coupled with the high pitch of rents which has resulted in the selling up of many holdings for arrears of rent, the consequent accumulation of land in the hands of zamindars, the large increase in the number of landless men, neglect by the landlords of irrigation works, petty oppression by zamindari amla, the growth of political consciousness and other factors have all contributed to spread a feeling of discontent. This discontent centers mainly round the land generally known as Bakasht malik, i.e., land in possession of the landlord because during the economic slump of last 10 years large areas of land formerly held by raiyats have passed from the raiyats into the possession of the landlords.

To understand the problem of the bakasht lands, it is necessary to understand what the term 'Bakasht malik' means. Land in possession of a landlord may be of two classes. Firstly there are *zirat* or *sir* lands which are lands that have been in the cultivating possession of landlords from time immemorial and which are recognized by custom and in the settlement records as being the private land of the landlord. Secondly there is land known as bakasht which includes all other land which has come into the possession of the landlord. This possession may be of diverse origin. The landlord may have reclaimed the land himself from waste that has not been recorded as *zirat*. The land may have lapsed to the landlord on surrender or abandonment by the raiyat, or because he has died without heirs, or he may have purchased it in execution of a decree for rent, or he may have purchased the occupancy rights. In such lands the landlord may either decide to cultivate himself or he may resettle it permanently or he may lease it from time to time to tenants. It is a basic principle underlying all the Tenancy Acts in force in this province that the cultivator should be able to acquire occupancy right in any land settled with them which is not in the actual cultivation of the landlord or recognised by custom as being his private land. Further, the rights of the landlord in land possessed by him, whether as *zirat* or as bakasht have been closely circumscribed. Any person who holds land as a raiyat in a village for a period of 12 years thereby becomes a settled raiyat and obtains the right of occupancy in any land for the time being held by him as a raiyat in that village. If, therefore, a zamindar settles bakasht land with a settled raiyat, whether permanently or temporarily, the raiyat obtains an occupancy right and even if the raiyat is not a settled raiyat of the village, he gains, an occupancy right as soon as he has held possession of any land in the

village for 12 years. The only class of landlords' land which is protected from the accrual of occupancy rights is zirat and that only to a limited extent. The rights of the landlord in his zirat remain intact so long as he cultivates the land himself or settles it by a registered lease for a definite term of years or from year to year. But if it is cultivated on a raiyati tenancy on terms other than this, an occupancy right may accrue. The controversy which has sprung up around the bakasht lands is, as stated above, mainly due to the fact that an enormous number of occupancy holdings have been sold up for rent during the last 10 years and are in possession to retain these holdings and to attempt to prevent the fresh accrual of occupancy rights in them, partly from a natural instinct of aggrandizement which is common to all who are concerned with the land, partly because they themselves have been put to great loss through the defaults in rent which led to the selling up of these holdings. They have, in numerous cases, had to buy the holdings themselves without recovering the arrears of rent and the only way open to them to recoup their losses was to retain the holdings in their possession and endeavour at a profit. It was in many cases impossible to recoup their losses by resettlement of the land with the original raiyats because the ex-raiyats could not afford either to pay up the dues nor to pay a salami for its representation-settlement. In consequence various devices have been used to prevent the accrual of rights. Such lands have been settled in many cases with settled raiyats of the village or with the ex-raiyats of the holdings, but no pattas or receipts are given. Tenants are often changed from year to year or every few years and in some cases the boundaries of holdings and fields have been obliterated and the identity of the holding lost. The raiyats are becoming increasingly conscious of their rights of occupancy under the law, but they have felt themselves powerless to make good those rights because they have been unable, in the absence of documentary evidence, to establish them in a court of law. They have watched with growing discontent the passing of considerable areas of raiyati lands, which were formerly theirs, into the hands of landlords, lands which belonged to the raiyati stock and in which they have an inherent right to acquire occupancy rights, but are prevented from doing so. The discontent which has sprung up, therefore, is due to the increasing land hunger and the diminution of the stock of raiyati land, the increasing knowledge among the cultivators of their rights in the land and the realization that the landlords are, in many cases, preventing them from gaining those rights.

On the other hand landlords are, in very many cases, willing and often anxious to resettle the lands with raiyats if they could do so in any way which would recoup them for a portion of the losses that they have suffered on them in the past. But in the present economic condition this has been impossible and the difficulty of arriving at a reasonable settlement has been increased by the effects of agitation. The Kisan Sabha which is mainly responsible for organizing the agitation among the cultivators have adopted a line which can only make a reasonable settlement of the problem more difficult. They have sedulously preached the root and branch destruction of the whole zamindari system, the doctrine that all land belongs to the raiyat, they have constantly showed and proved upon the landlords and have encouraged the cultivators repeatedly to take the law into their own hands, to occupy in defiance of decrees of court or any other legal process lands of which they claim to be in possession and to resist any attempts of the landlord to exercise possession. Such agitation has, in many cases, resulted in the tenants putting forward to claim and to take possession of lands which were never in their possession or which they had abandoned years ago.

The Ministry has, from the beginning of its term of office, devoted anxious consideration to this problem. Government have examined the law and have enacted fresh legislation in an endeavour to secure to the cultivators ... of their grievances. Legislation has been passed for the reduction of rents and for the remission of arrears of rents and this is rapidly being carried into

execution all over the province. They have passed a Moneylenders' Act which should improve materially the position of agricultural indebtedness. They have passed an Act to secure the restoration of raiyati holdings which were sold up for rent during the period of depression between 1929 and 1937 and they hope that this act, which is now being put into operation, will result in restoration to the raiyats of many of their holdings. But in passing that Act they have had to take into consideration also the equitable rights of the landlords and they have, therefore, found it necessary both to provide that part of the arrears of rent on such holdings should be paid up as a condition for re-settlement and also that holdings which have since been resettled which other tenants must be excluded from the scope of the Act. These conditions could not, in fairness, have been omitted. They consider that as far as legislation is concerned, they have done all that they could fairly or reasonably do. The problem now is not one of law, but of fact. The existing law gives to the raiyat all the rights that he can demand. It recognises the right of the raiyat to acquire occupancy rights in any land in the village except the landlords' zirat and even in the zirat he is able to acquire an occupancy rights in any land that he holds as a raiyat unless the land has been settled with him under the particular conditions laid down in section 116 of the Bihar Tenancy Act. The tenants' reasonable rights are, therefore, clearly defined and recognized. The only question that remains is the question of the fact whether in any particular case the tenant is or not in possession and whether an occupancy right has or has not accrued. But this is not an issue which requires either agitation or unlawful action or the use of a force to settle. By inflaming the passions of the cultivators, by making exaggerated or false claims and by forcible seizure of lands in dispute, the task is only made more difficult; the facts are obscured, contempt for the law is endangered and the task of Government and of their officers in endeavouring to arrive at the facts and to redress such wrongs as exists is impossible. In order that a just solution may be achieved, the facts regarding the issues in dispute must be settled. It is recognized that the cultivator often finds it difficult to prove his claim even where it is just, because the conditions under which bakasht land is let out by the landlord make it impossible for him to produce documents; and in the absence of reliable oral evidence on either side, the courts have, in the past, been compelled to decide cases mainly on documentary evidence. But Government have, for some time past, encouraged their officers to endeavour to settle these disputes by means other than a regular suit or proceeding under section 145 of the Criminal Procedure Code. They have encouraged them to resort more freely to local enquiries, to arbitration and conciliation and they believe that with goodwill on both sides it is possible to settle in a reasonable manner nearly all genuine bakasht disputes. But the success of such efforts must be jeopardized and may become impossible if those responsible for the kisan movement continue to encourage the cultivators to make exaggerated claims, to place themselves above the law and to take forcible possession of lands and to defy authority.

92. Amended Kisan Sabha Constitution

Bombay Sentinel, 27 July 1939

Swami Sahajanand Saraswati, the General Secretary, AIKS has issued the following circular.

The amended constitution of the AIKS is ready and it can be had from this office, from Com. Indulal Yagnik, 21, Dalal Street, Fort, Bombay or from All India Kisan Publications, 23, Stringers Street, Madras, its price being anna one per copy, postage extra. You should hurry to purchase it and ask others to do the same. As some radical changes have been introduced in it you cannot do without it.

While reminding you that the 30th November is the last date for the enrolment of the primary members of the Kisan Sabha I draw your pointed attention to the articles 6th and 12th of the

constitution. The 1st section of the article 6 lays down the basis and the number of delegates from each province. You must go carefully through all the three sub-sections of it. The third section provides for the indirect election of delegates by district Kisan organisation. The method of direct election adopted so far has been given up. But there is one thing worth notice given in that section and that is that prior to the election of delegates by the district organisations every province will have to complete the constitution of all the organisations up to the district ones on the basis of the newly enlisted members, in order that the new members may be able in the absence of district elections, to influence the election of delegates of the AIKS members and of the president of the AIKS for the coming year.

In the 12th article you will find that clause (a) directs each provincial organisation to pay annually one pie out of its every 12 pies of the membership fees. Please note it and act accordingly. It will be better if you go on sending gradually to this office the quota of the affiliation fee as only the pies sent to us will ascertain the number of members enrolled by you.

Clause (b) of the same article requires that your provincial constitution must be approved by the CKC. Please, therefore, send some copies of your constitution very soon.

I am confident that brisk enrolment of primary members in your province is going on and it will considerably exceed the last year's number.

National struggle week

You are aware that the Land Consolidation Committee decided on the 30th June last to organize and observe the 'National Struggle Week' beginning from the 12th August next and ending on the 13th. There will be 7 different days celebrated in the week and the detailed programme of the same will be issued later on. You will do well in making general propaganda and preparation for the same from just now in order to achieve a complete success. I need hardly remind you of the All-India Kisan Day falling as usual on the 1st September. You will keep it in your mind and will remind you of it again when that date approaches.

93. Harihar Prasad to M.N. Roy, 28 July 1939

File No. 3, Part X, Bihar 1938-40, M N. Roy Papers, NMML

Dear Comrade Roy,

...Kisan movement in the neighbouring villages is in full swing. It was primarily started by workers of the Kisan Sabha but later we joined them purely with a motive to push forward the Congress programme and to create awakening and consciousness in the peasantry.

The movement is in force for a very long time, for more than a year. Our colleagues have courted imprisonment and have suffered assaults at the hands of the landlords; so much so that only a few days back one of our workers was so very injured that he lay for days together in Sasaram hospital and has narrowly escaped death. So you see the movement has not been confined to meetings, speeches and resolutions only. The workers have paid the price rather dearly for it. And now it thrives. The movement has gone deep among the masses and the landlords have yielded to it. A talk of compromise is going on between the landlords and the kisan through the intervention of Government officials. But in case the attempt at compromise failed, the Kisan Sabhaites are quite prepared to launch satyagraha on *bakasht* lands.

We may tell you that there are only a few who are purely Kisan Sabhaites. Even those who belong to Kisan Sabha are Congressmen and excepting a few, are also members of the LRC. Again there are workers including the writer himself who have no concern with Kisan Sabha and are Congressmen and members of the LRC and work only in that capacity. It is on behalf of such

of us that I have been asked to write to you for instructions under the circumstances for we have also a fair share in the movement.

In the face of the Patel Resolutions we cannot now take part in starting Satyagraha without the permission of the PCC and to remain aloof from it in the nick of time is betrayal to the cause which has been espoused in right earnest, and which would naturally be fatal to our political life and career.

We hope you must have understood our position and we would request you to let us know the right course that we should pursue. We will esteem a reply by return of post.

Thanking you in anticipation.

Yours sincerely,

Sd

Harihar Prasad

Member of LRC Sasaram

94. Tragedy of the Kisans

Bombay Sentinel, 17 August 1939

17 August 1939

The Home Minister of Bombay, Mr K.M. Munshi, assured a member in the Legislative Assembly that he was carefully watching the activities and the movements of the Kisan leaders in Gujarat and that he would take steps against them whenever he felt it necessary.

This is typical of the attitude of the Congress and Congress Ministries all over the country towards Kisan movement and its leaders, who have been doing what they consider to be their duty at great sacrifice and much suffering.

The movement in Bombay is yet in its infancy, but in other Provinces it has become very vigorous. In Bihar especially where the agricultural masses have been ground down by the zamindars there have been open revolts against the existing system.

Callously watching

Every day scores of persons are being arrested for offering satyagraha and some of them are hunger-striking in the prisons of Bihar for over 80 days, without the Ministers yielding to their demands in any way. Their death is now certain.

When the Andaman prisoners took to hunger-strike, the whole Nationalist Press raised its powerful voice against such an atrocity and the Government had to surrender ultimately.

But now the same Press is callously but silently, watching the tragedy in Bihar where four kisan leaders have been on hunger-strike for the last 80 days and two for 40 days, without being able to influence the Congress Government to grant their modest demands.

One wonders what really has come over the Congress Ministers, the Working Committee and the Mahatma that they can all be indifferent to these tragic happenings and refuse to move even a little finger to save these men.

In Bengal the hunger-strike of 89 prisoners stirred the whole country, and even Gandhiji had to appeal to the strikers to give it up. But thanks to the influence of Mr Subhas Bose, the prisoners suspended their fast and promised to wait for two months.

Resentment and amazement

The Congress Working Committee's resolution condemning such hunger-strikes has naturally caused resentment and amazement in the country and it is not surprising that the Forward Bloc has passed a resolution against it.

Evidently, the Congress Working Committee believes that whatever happens the position of the Ministers should not be weakened, though a few people may have to die for the vindication of their rights.

But after the events in Bihar Jail, one can quite understand the peculiar position of the Congress Working Committee. In Bihar, the hunger-strikers can be released at a sign from the Congress President or Gandhiji, but they prefer to do nothing in the matter, and not the least reference to them is made by the Working Committee in its resolution.

In fact these men are deliberately forgotten by the Congress, because they happen to be kisan leaders and the Congress Government's hands are raised against them.

But in Bengal, because there is a non-Congress Ministry, there is such an outcry against the ministers, that the Congress even tolerated the threat of Satyagraha against the Government. If Calcutta hunger-strikers have to be saved, much more so the Bihar Kisans, though they be humble persons, unknown to the public, owing to the sinister silence of the Congress Press.

Standard of revolt

One wonders, we repeat, what has come over the Congress ministers, the Working Committee and even the Congress President that they can pass over such horrifying events without doing anything to save the lives of these humble Kisans and their leaders; We are afraid brief power has warped their minds and their moral fibre has deteriorated.

It is apparent from all this that not much help can be expected from the Working Committee or the Congress in saving or releasing the Bengal prisoners, who have been promised their release within the next two months.

If the Congress takes up the unhelpful attitude it has already done, it will merely strengthen the hands of the Huq Ministry and they can then afford to snap their fingers at the Congress.

And yet, Mr Bose and his followers have been punished for condemning this attitude and for threatening to resort to Satyagraha whenever they may feel it necessary. All this may be helpful to Congress Ministries, but certainly not to the country or the hunger-strikers who are languishing in Bengal's prisons.

But it is encouraging that Mr Bose and the Forward Bloc are determined not to yield to the Working Committee, and if necessary the Bengal Province Congress Committee will raise the standard of revolt.

It is for that purpose that the Working Committee of the All India Forward Bloc at its meeting in Calcutta resolved on supporting the BPCC in withstanding the pressure of the Congress Working Committee.

Sooner or later

Mr Bose should not rest content with releasing the hunger-strikers in Bengal jails, and he should also include the hunger-striking prisoners of the Bihar Congress Ministry. There is no alternative to it. Sooner or later, there will have to be some sort of Satyagraha whether in Bihar or Bengal.

If it has to be resorted to for saving the lives of these tragic prisoners it should be done without the least hesitation, in spite of the Congress resolution, for the Ministers are not amenable either to reason or persuasion. The country will support Mr Bose.

If it is bad to keep so many political prisoners in Bengal Jails it is equally reprehensible on the part of the Bihar Ministry to callously watch the hunger-striking prisoners dying slowly, and making a supreme sacrifice for what they conceive to be their cause.

The Congress has already come into much disrepute but if by their acts a single kisan prisoner loses his life, it will condemn itself for ever and its name will become a by-word for political hypocrisy and opportunism.

95. Action Against Sahajananda

Amrita Bazar Patrika, 6 September 1939

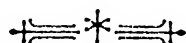
Patna

3 September 1939

At an emergent meeting of the Council of Action of the Bihar Socialist Party held at the residence of Mr Jayaprakash Narayan at Kadamkuan, Patna, under the presidentship of Mr Phulan Prasad Varma, the following resolution was adopted:

'It is the considered opinion of the Council of Action of the Bihar Socialist Party that the disciplinary action taken against Swami Sahajanand Saraswati, Comrade K.P. Sinha, Secretary of the Party and several other Comrades and the notice to show cause issued against Comrade Jayaprakash Narayan, Secretary, All-India Congress Socialist Party, Comrade Avadeshwar Sinha, Secretary Provincial Kisan Sabha and Comrade Benipuri by the Working Committee are not actuated by the desire to maintain discipline within the Congress, but to suppress the Left forces of the Congress. The motive becomes all the more clear when one finds that the sentence has been passed this time against persons, who by no stretch of constitutional finesse, can be held to be guilty of breach of discipline, for they were no office-bearers and against whom it could not even be plausibly urged that they were responsible for putting into effect the official resolution of the Congress. This decision was taken by the Working Committee without giving even a chance to Swami Sahajanand and some of his Comrades to explain their conduct. Such an attitude makes it unmistakably clear as to what the real motive is.

This Council holds the view that every Congressman is entitled to express his views publicly on any resolution of the Congress and if he considers a particular resolution to be wrong, it is not only his right but his duty to carry on propaganda for its reversal or amendment and even to appeal to the country to send such delegates to the Congress, who would get it rescinded. This is the elementary democratic right of every Congressman and to take away that right in the name of discipline simply because the expression of certain views which does not suit the group in power is politically dishonest, particularly when breaches of discipline in the past arising out of the conduct of their own men have been condoned.'



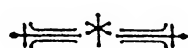
96. On the condition of the Peasantry: A summary report of the meeting held at Pimpalgaon Taluka, Malegaon District, on 5 September 1939

G.B. Bhutekar's speech at Pimpalgaon, Malegaon Taluka, Weekly Confidential Reports, 1939, Maharashtra State Archives

6 September 1939

Dr Bhutekar in the beginning sang the usual song describing the pitiable condition of the peasants, and said 'Brothers, we have gathered here to think about a meeting to be held here in the near future. You know that meetings of peasants were held at Dabhadi, Talwade, Aghar Ajang and Malegaon camp. We want to hold a similar meeting here and so I have come here to consult you and to fix a date for the same.

The object of holding such meetings is to improve the condition of the peasants. Why do the peasants not get sufficient maintenance even though they toil in the fields so hard day and night? The reason is policy and the laws framed by government. They are responsible for the bad condition of the peasants. What is the remedy for removing this condition? The remedy is that we must all unite. Unity is the only remedy for this. If we unite and do not quarrel among ourselves, government laws cannot affect us. For instance the law about property is that it can be equally divided among all the brothers of a family. The effect of the law is that all the brothers create quarrel in order to get it equally divided and have to seek the help of pleaders, in order to fight in the courts of law. In this way all are in trouble and have to lose money in seeking the help of law. Had the law been that the property could not be divided in this way all this trouble would have been saved and families would have lived happily. This law has purposely been so framed in India by the British Government, in order to create quarrels amongst us and thus rule India for ever. This is their divide and rule policy. From this you can see the nature of this law. We do not want such laws. What should then be done to get rid of such laws? The remedy for this is that we must have power to make our own laws. And for being able to make laws we must get ourselves educated. Government do not want to educate you. They want to keep you in dark. They want to keep you ignorant. We are telling government for the last 50 years that we want education but government do not pay any heed to that. Peasants have no education. Government are ruling over us as for the last 150 years and still we are uneducated. They must be ashamed of this. Educated people taking advantage of your ignorance deceive you and deprive you of everything and thus keep you in poverty for life. See how these Governors, Collectors, Mamlatdars, Faujdars and all government servants enjoy their life. They work for a limited number of hours and spend the rest of their life in merriment. And see how miserably you have to pass your life. You and your children and family members do not get even sufficient food. What is the remedy to get out of all this trouble? The remedy is unity as I have said before. We must all unite and acquire power of general adult franchise. All persons of and above the ages of 18 years must have a right of vote. When you get this power you can get all your grievances redressed and you can be happy. We have to put all our grievances and demands before the Ma-Bap Sarkar very peacefully and legitimately and for this we have to arrange a meeting here in a few days ...'



97. Delhi Peasants present their demands

Demands of Delhi Peasants, *Hindustan Times*, 17 September 1939

Delhi
17 September 1939

A panchayat of the cultivators of all the villages of Delhi was held on Wednesday, September 13, in the villages of Sultanpur dabbas. This was the first Panchayat to which more than 300 villages sent their representatives to voice their grievances. About 3,000 representatives attended the Panchayat.

The proceedings of the Panchayat lasted from 12 noon to 5 p.m. More than thirty representatives from the various villages delivered speeches on various subjects concerning the villagers and seventeen resolutions were unanimously adopted. The speakers threw much light on the deplorable conditions of the peasants and made an appeal to the local government to come to the rescue of the peasantry by improving their condition. Of the resolutions passed the more important ones concerned the famine *bandobast*, the removal of the slaughter house from Basai Darapur, the release of Sh. Satyawanti and the establishment of village Panchayats and a Central Panchayat for the Province of Delhi for the better organisation of the village population. An appeal was made to all the villagers to study all the resolutions passed in the Panchayat and to try their best to organise their own village Panchayats and thus help to achieve their goal, namely, the improvement of their economic and social conditions.

98. Abolition of Landlordism and Land Revenue System demanded

Bombay Chronicle, 28 September 1939

The following is summary of some of the important resolutions adopted by the first Gujarat Kisan Conference held at Gusar in Panch Mahals district on April 1-2 under the presidentship of Dr Sumant Mehta.

At the outset the Conference paid its tribute to the Kisan men, women and children who had suffered deaths, assaults and imprisonments in the course of struggles in the provinces, Indian States and Agency Areas of Gujarat and Kathiawar.

Kisan Strikes

By another resolution the Conference asserted the kisan's rights to adequate maintenance for himself and his family as the first charge on the produce of his soil and proclaimed his right to strike that is to withhold payments of revenue, rent and debts when there is no surplus left with him to pay these charges. Accordingly the Conference supported the rent and revenue strikes carried on by the peasants of Radhanpur, Cambay, Baroda, Chota Udayapur, Barihya and Lunavada States and in the Talukas of Mandavi and Kalol in the Bombay Presidency. The Conference further condemns the tyrannies and oppression perpetrated on the kisans while they were engaged in their rightful struggles.

Bombay Tenancy Bill

The Conference condemned the Bombay Tenancy Bill as unsatisfactory and even injurious to the rights of the tenants and called upon the Government of Bombay to grant by law the following demands of the tenants:

- (1) Total remission of all the arrears of rent.
- (2) Restitution of tenants in the lands occupied by them in July 1937.
- (3) Rent in Inamdari and Talukdari villages should be fixed at not more than the land revenue assessed by the Government similar lands.
- (4) Rent should not exceed land revenue by more than 1/3 in other lands.
- (5) All extra payments and imposts levied so far in Inamdari and Talukdari villages should be declared illegal.
- (6) All systems of crop-sharing should be abolished.
- (7) All debts accruing from the arrears of debts should be wiped out.
- (8) In case failure of crops rent should be reduced at the same rate at which land revenue is remitted or suspended.
- (9) No rent suit will lie against the tenant till there is failure in payment of rent for three successive years and even then land and produce necessary for his maintenance, two *milch* cattle, standing crop and household utensils should be immune from attachment.

The Conference then sent its greetings to the peasants of Lavet and adjoining villages in the Mangrol Taluka of the Baroda State for carrying on their no-rent campaign and accorded its general support to the principle underlined in the Bill drafted by Mr Keshav Rao Deshpande to amend the Baroda Tenancy Act.

Regarding the Talukdari and Inamdari areas the Conference called for the total abolition of all systems of landlordism as injurious to the Kisans as well as the State and set out a Charter of Kisans' Rights on the line mentioned above. The Charter further concluded full rights of say mortgage and gifts to the Kisans rights over their trees and the wells and canals on or adjoining their lands. The Conference also demanded that the revenue officers in these villages should be appointed by Government and the landlord to collect his dues from the local revenue office and not directly from the tenants. The landlord was also required by the Conference to pay 1/4th of his income towards the malguzari of institution beneficial to the village.

99. Indulal Yajnik Addresses Meetings

Weekly Confidential reports of the Collector of Surat, File No.800(53)BV 1939, Government of Bombay, Maharashtra State Archives

28 September 1939

Agrarian—On 23 September 1939, Mr Indulal Yagnik addressed two meetings under the auspices of the Kisan Sabha, one at Khergam, Mandal Chikhli, and the other at Muli, Taluka Bulsar. There were about 400 persons present at the Khergam meeting and they were mostly Kolis and Dhodias. Mr Indulal said that their sympathies should be with Poland and countries that are siding the Poles. But at the same time, it is better for them to remain aloof from the war. The Viceroy has started throwing one bomb after another in the form of Ordinances, which curtail the liberty of speech, press and movements. This year the condition of the peasant is such that it will be hard for them to pay any rent or land revenue and they should plainly tell the concerned they have nothing out of which they could meet the dues. To this end they might have to launch a fight with Government officers and they should be prepared to fight the battle unitedly and without fear. It is said the peasants appeared to be enthusiastic and took great interest in the speech.

The tone of speeches at the Muli meeting was more or less the same as above. There were about 200 persons present from the neighbouring villages. Mr Thakorbbhai, one of the speakers, criticized the action of the Revenue and Police officers of Pardi Mahal and said that the officers

were crushing poor peasants by siding with landlords. He also said that Government has licensed the rich to squeeze the poor by fixing prices at 20 per cent above the September level. Criticising the District Local Board, he said the president paid taxes to the Board, but got nothing in return. Mr Indulal Yagnik addressing the meeting said that the Congress ministers are very clever. They give by one hand and take it away by the other. They will go on giving promises, but to be sure, they would not do anything substantial for the peasants. The only solvent for the peasantry is to have a powerful union of their own. Regarding the condition of the crops, he said that they had failed miserably and he warned the Revenue officers not to make inflated annewaries. He also advised the peasants to be present at the time the Revenue Officers make the annewaris. It is said that the audience liked the idea of Indulal asking them not to pay anything to the *sawkars*.

100. On Peasant grievances

Summary report of a public meeting held at Bhal village on 9 November 1939

Home Department Special Branch, File No. 927-A, part 3, Maharashtra State Archives.

At the outset, Jayatu Narayan Patil said: 'This meeting has been convened to think about our condition in respect of rent (*Khand*) and loan in the situation of famine. Due to want of rain in most of the part of Kalyan, a famine has occurred. Due to failure of rice crop there is only 6 annas rice crop on average. Under such state of things, no rent should be given to the landlords till the decision of the Kalyan Taluka Conference of peasants and workers, which is to be held on 10th of the next month.

Speaking about the 'Palimodi' system the speaker said: 'The Palimodi system means to take a rupee on loan from the *sawakar* and to repay it in 2 months by way of rice worth Rs 3. This system is illegal and so you should tell the *sawakars* that we will not pay rice worth Rs 3 for a loan of a rupee but will pay a rupee when we will get it.'

While speaking over the system of paying the *khand*, the speaker said: 'It has been decided by the court of law after the trial of some cases between the landlords and tenants in respect of rent that *khand* should be paid by 24 *pallies* a *maund* and not by 32 *pailies* a *maund*. If a *sawakar* or a landlord demands a *khand* by 32 *pailies* a *maund* you should refuse to pay it. You should not be afraid of the attachment if brought by the *sawakar*, because a peasant has been given protection by law that his bullocks, pots, the occupied house by tenants, 15 *maunds* rice per head of his family and such other utensils required for cultivation and maintenance could not be attached. A *sawakar* also cannot bring an attachment over 14 acres of land. The *sawakars* and the landlords are enjoying luxurious life at the cost of poor peasants. A kisan though works for the whole day in the field still he does not get sufficient to eat and to wear and so in order to ameliorate our condition, we should stand on our own legs and bring about unity amongst us. When you will go to your village, you should tell to every peasant of your village not to pay rent to the landlords till the ensuing Conference decides and to abolish the system of *Palimodi*.

Miss Godubai Gokhale said: 'I am doing the work of Mr Parulekar as he is absent for today's meeting. I am going to tell you something about your Sangha (union), loan, rent and the present war. Our Kalyan Peasant Sangha has been started since last year. It has done some work for the peasants during the year. The main work of the union is to bring about unity among all the peasants of Kalyan, under the Red Flag and on the strength of that unity we have to get our rights. The peasant, who works for day and night in his field and prepares rice, has not sufficient rice to eat. A mill-worker who prepares a lot of cloth has not sufficient cloth to wear. So also any other worker who erects huge buildings has got no house to live. In short, the happiness of the whole depends upon the work of peasants, mill-hands and other workers and labourers and so in order

to reap the proper fruit of their labour and to bring about unity amongst the toiling masses, the Red Flag has come into existence. With the same object in view, the Kalyan Peasants' Sangha has been established last year under the Red Flag to get their own rights established'.

Speaking about the *Khand* to be paid to *sawakars* and landlords, she endorsed the views of the previous speaker and requested the audience to come to the Conference to be held in the next month near Kalyan. She further added: 'On account of the opening of the Kalyan Peasants' Sangha, the *sawakars* are afraid of the peasants and to continue the same feelings in their minds and to make our movement forcible with a view to stop oppression of the landlords and *sawakars*, you should all unite under the Red Flag, and you should convey this message to every one of your village.'

The speaker speaking about the present war said: 'You all know that the war has begun. This war is being fought between England and Germany for their selfish ends. Due to war the prices of commodities have gone high. When the present war will come in full swing the British Government will ask for our help, i.e., of the toiling masses. You should say to the British Government that we are ready to die in the war for our own profit, but not for their own interest. We are not ready to die in the war by which we are not profited. We are ready to help you in this war if you will assure to ameliorate our condition, to declare our country as a free nation and also to maintain our family if we die in the war and to solve our questions in respect of debt and land.'

D.K. Desai said: 'I am sick still I have to say that we should strengthen our movement to stop the exploitation done by Capitalists, landlords, *sawakars* and the Government. We have to regain our lost wealth. In the last Great War 40 lacs of Indians died but the British Government did not give anything in return except erecting some stony (sic) monuments. During the present year the *sawakars* taking the government servants in their hands trouble the peasants in the struggle in respect of weights and measures. So we do not want such servants who give protection to the Capitalists. I lastly appeal to you all not to give *khand* to the landlords till the decision of the ensuing Conference. By that time you should all unite just as the people of Badlapur have united.'

101. Police Zulum

AICC Papers, File No. P-12(Part I)/1939-40, NMML

The early days of the Congress Ministry were noted for the healthy change in the attitude of the officers. They were apprehensive as to what would happen to their usual practices when people known for their strict outlook on public morality are in office. Things, however, changed rapidly. Speeches of the Premier to the effect that policemen are as much serving the Congress as ordinary Congress workers, that Congress workers should not make it their habit to poke their noses into administrative affairs, are taken to mean as a distinct rebuke to Congressmen and Congress Committees. He is also stated to have told the Superintendent of Police that he need not very much care what Congress Committees say. It is, at any rate, true that the police authorities have been taking a hostile attitude to Congressmen. In many places they are even inciting the Muslim Leaguers to attack and disrupt Congress meetings and processions. Apart from their political hostility to Congressmen in general very grave crimes remain undetected (this include murder cases of which culprits could not be found out even in spite of fact that MLAs like Shri M.P. Damodaran, C.K. Govindan Nair and P. Madhavan tried their level best to trace the offenders. It is an open secret in these cases that monied men are behind the said atrocities). Instead of bringing the offenders to book, poor men and women are sometimes harassed and even assaulted. When Congressmen in their zeal to fight such rank cases of corruption come forward, they are prosecuted for obstructing public servants in the course of their duty. The officers

do not even mind if the prosecution fails, what they want is harassing them. This has not only discredited the Congress Ministry in the eyes of the general public, but also chilled the enthusiasm of Congress workers in carrying out the Congress programme.

It is suggested that (1) an enquiry be immediately ordered into the conduct of policemen at least in connection with grave murder cases remaining undetected, and (2) a general circular issued uttering a note of severe warning to policemen and officers ...

The attitude of district authorities towards the peasant movement in North Malabar is to be deplored. A circular by the district authorities to the effect that punitive police are going to be posted in Chirakkal Taluk was a shock to the Committee. The Government, the Committee notes with pleasure and gratitude, turned down the proposal of the District authorities. This probably infuriated them and they began to institute cases against peasants and peasant workers. A number of cases were launched and it was a perpetual nuisance to Congress and peasant workers. The authorities not only instituted proceedings, themselves, but also incited landlords and their agents to file cases against peasants and peasant workers. It was an uphill task for Congress and Kisan Sabhas to conduct these cases on behalf of the peasants. And it has been amply proved by the fact that in almost all these cases and accused were acquitted either in the first instance or in appeal that these cases were in fact based on false charges. It is, nonetheless, true that nothing has been done to protect the peasants and their workers against such harassment at least in future. It is only in fitness of things that the Government comes out openly expressing sympathy with the peasants and assuring them of protection for the future.

Tenancy Committee

The Committee notes with pleasure that the Tenancy Act Revision Committee has been appointed by the Government. The Committee, however, has to express its keen disappointment that adequate representation has not been given to the Peasants' Union, while the Jenmies have been represented by the Jenmi representative in the Madras Assembly, that of the Central Assembly and Sri P.K. Kunhisankara Menon and while the non-Congress non-jenmi members are people who represent either the Jenmi interest as those of the non-cultivating tenants, there is nobody who is likely to champion the cause of the cultivating tenants (except, of course, Congress MLAs). It will be in the fitness of things if adequate representation is given to the All Malabar Peasants Union. It is also to be remembered that all the leading Malayalam papers (including some which are not at all friendly to the peasant movement) have voiced their feelings in the matter. It is therefore hoped that the Government will see its way to accept the suggestion and nominate two more members from this union...

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